

TIME

THE ART OF THE DUEL

by
MOLLY BALL



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^ Furloughed federal workers demonstrate near Independence Hall in Philadelphia on Jan. 8

Photograph by Matt Rourke—AP

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Illustration by Jason Seiler for TIME

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Conversation



WHAT YOU SAID ABOUT...

THE FUTURE OF BABIES Many readers saw themselves in Stephanie Zacharek's Jan. 14 essay "Why I'm Glad I Didn't Have Kids," part of a package on fertility. Patti Clasen of Huntington Beach, Calif., said she and her husband are "grateful every day" they didn't have kids; one father who did admitted to wishing he hadn't. "If, instead of all the unsolicited advice, faux concern and nosy questions I fielded in my 30s, I could have read this @szacharek essay, it would have been a real gift," tweeted *Hollywood Reporter* editor Rebecca Keegan. And @joeangier tweeted that, though men "don't get harassed as much" about childlessness, he was sure many still related. But Yolanda Machado tweeted that the "subtle implication that you can't pursue your dreams" as a mom shows "society has a LONG WAY to go" on views about women.

'My unborn children are infinitely better off that I never had them.'

BARBARA GORGA,
Waldwick, N.J.

GENERALS ABANDON SHIP Readers praised former NATO commander Admiral James Stavridis' piece in that issue about military generals leaving the Trump Administration. "Stavridis sees right through Trump" in analyzing why military figures appealed

to the President, wrote Kathy Huff of Apple Valley, Minn. Tweets by Alice Hunt Friend, a senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, called for more discussion of whether "we are comfortable trading away standards of military separation from domestic politics to get some added controls over a reckless president."

'Admiral, please throw your hat in the ring for 2020.'

@HVYLUV,
on Twitter

IN THE NEWS

TIME celebrated New Year's Eve in NYC with editor-in-chief Edward Felsenthal and 2018 Person of the Year designee Maria Ressa (top, third and second from right) starting the official count-down alongside other journalists like NBC's Lester Holt and CNN's Alisyn Camerota. On Jan. 5, TIME co-sponsored the CORE: Community Organized Relief Effort gala in L.A., attended by stars like Jamie Foxx.



ORIENTATION DAY Go behind the scenes of our Jan. 2 photo shoot with new members of Congress—such as (below) Deb Haaland (D., N.M.) and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D., N.Y.)—on their first day. Max Rose (D., N.Y.) said it felt like the start of high school, trying to remember names and worrying "that someone doesn't like you." Watch: time.com/freshmen



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For the Record

**\$41.7
billion**

Global movie box office sales
in 2018, an all-time high

**'HE WAS A
LITTLE BIT OF
A HERMIT. I
VERY RARELY
SAW HIM
OUTSIDE OF
HIS SHELL.'**

DAVID SISCHO,
a wildlife biologist with the
Hawaii department of
land and natural resources,
describing George, a Hawaiian
land snail that died on New
Year's Day in a lab in Kailua,
Oahu, at age 14; George was
the last of his species



612

Weight, in pounds, of a
bluefin tuna that went for
a record \$3.1 million at
a fish-market auction in
Tokyo on Jan. 5

**'When
activists
came
marching
and banging
on the doors,
I wanted to
be on the
other side to
let them in.'**

KAMALA HARRIS,
U.S. Senator (D., Calif.), describing why she became
a prosecutor in her new book, *The Truths We Hold*

**'Why do wealthy politicians build walls,
fences and gates around their homes?
They don't build walls because they hate
the people on the outside but because
they love the people on the inside.'**

DONALD TRUMP,
U.S. President, justifying a wall on the U.S.-Mexico border in a prime-
time TV address on Jan. 8, day 18 of the partial government shutdown

***'I have been wrongly accused
and unfairly detained.'***

CARLOS GHOSN,
Former Nissan Motor chairman, in his first public remarks since he was arrested in Tokyo on Nov. 19 for
allegedly lying to the Japanese government about his compensation and mismanaging company funds



**11 hr.
36 min.**

Time it took K-pop star
Kang Daniel to set a
Guinness World Record for
shortest time to rack up
1 million Instagram followers;
the previous record was
12 hr., set by Pope Francis

Queensland
Thousands of
beachgoers stung
by jellyfish in the
Australian state



Queen
Biopic *Bohemian
Rhapsody* won
Golden Globe for
best drama

**'THERE ARE
NO POLITICAL
PRISONERS
IN EGYPT.'**

ABDUL FATTAH AL-SISI,
Egyptian President, in a
60 Minutes interview his gov-
ernment tried to stop CBS
from airing; Human Rights
Watch estimates there are
60,000 such prisoners

ILLUSTRATIONS BY BROWN BIRD DESIGN FOR TIME

The Brief



STOCK IN TRADE
An Apple Store in Beijing on Jan. 7, shortly after the company said it was having a sales problem in China

INSIDE

AFTER A HISTORIC VOTE,
CONGO WAITS—AND WAITS AND
WAITS—FOR RESULTS

THE DECADES OF HISTORY
BEHIND A LABOR DISPUTE FOR
LOS ANGELES TEACHERS

ACTIVIST TARANA BURKE
ON WHY CYNTOIA BROWN'S
CLEMENCY MATTERS

PHOTOGRAPH BY KEVIN FRAYER

TRADE

When the China trade war comes home

By Justin Worland

THE ONGOING TRADE WAR BETWEEN THE U.S. and China may seem chaotic, with twists and turns to flummox even the most seasoned analysts. But in the year since President Trump announced his first tariffs, his Administration has really pursued only one central strategy: weaken China's economy in order to force the country to change its trade practices.

In some ways, the strategy has worked. China's economy had already showed signs of slowing before the first tariffs hit, and the face-off with the U.S. has accelerated that trend. Economic growth in China sank in the third quarter of 2018 to its lowest level since 2009, and analysts say that situation could worsen if the trade tensions don't end. "China is not doing well now," Trump said on Jan. 4, an assessment experts say is largely right. "It puts us in a very strong position."

But China's slowdown has also put some of the U.S.'s most important industries in economic limbo. And no company's trade challenge is more telling than Apple's. The tech giant, which for a time last year ranked as the world's most valuable company, cut its revenue projections on Jan. 2, saying that trade tensions had hit its bottom line.

The iPhone, which accounts for 60% of Apple sales, is at the heart of the issue. In China, the product is significantly more expensive than those of homegrown competitors like Huawei, and buying the fancy American version ranks low on the list of priorities for many Chinese consumers who are tightening their belts. "We anticipated some challenges," Apple CEO Tim Cook wrote in a letter to investors. "We did not foresee the magnitude."

The company's stock dropped nearly 10% following the news, and analysts ramped up speculation about whether the company could count on China, its third largest market, to keep its long-term outlook bright. "If that market collapses, it's going to bring down the global market," says Ryan Reith, a vice president at the International Data Corp., a market-intelligence firm, who watches Apple.

The situation facing Apple underscores a simple reality. In an interconnected world, a range of American companies—from big tech firms to oil producers and everything in between—increasingly look to China to expand their bottom lines. And the more the country's

economy is battered, the more American firms will suffer the consequences. Indeed, the Dow Jones industrial average fell nearly 3% the day after the Apple news.

BUT NOT EVERYONE seems all that concerned about the situation. Trump dismissed worries about the effect of trade policy on Apple, saying that the company is "going to be fine" and that he needs to "worry about our country."

While the aggressive approach Trump has taken toward China may be clumsy, observers say it has brought a measure of force to negotiations. Talks between midlevel negotiators from both countries wrapped up on Jan. 9 with signs of optimism—including a celebratory Trump tweet before the round of negotiations had even concluded.

Indeed, China has already implemented a range of concessions, from removing key restrictions on U.S. auto companies to approving new kinds of genetically modified crops from the U.S. for import. Beijing has also offered to commit to buy more goods from the U.S., a move that would reduce the U.S. trade deficit, one of Trump's chief talking points.

Still, those promises are a small piece of the trade puzzle between the two countries, and working through some of the more substantive issues will prove challenging. U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer, a China hard-liner, was picked to lead the negotiations, signaling a high bar for any potential deal. And because many of the Administration's complaints cut to the core of China's long-term growth strategy, hitting that bar may be hard.

No matter how many concessions China offers, its leaders are unlikely to change course on carefully laid industrial plans to develop the country's economy. Chinese President Xi Jinping said as much in a Dec. 18 speech anticipating negotiations: "No one is in a position to dictate to the Chinese people what should or should not be done."

The countries have set March as the deadline to reach a new deal. Without one, higher tariffs on \$200 billion in Chinese goods—tariffs that Trump had originally planned to implement in January—will go into effect. Meeting or beating that deadline would alleviate tensions that have contributed to growing unease across the globe, whereas failed negotiations could cause a backlash among business leaders and send markets tumbling.

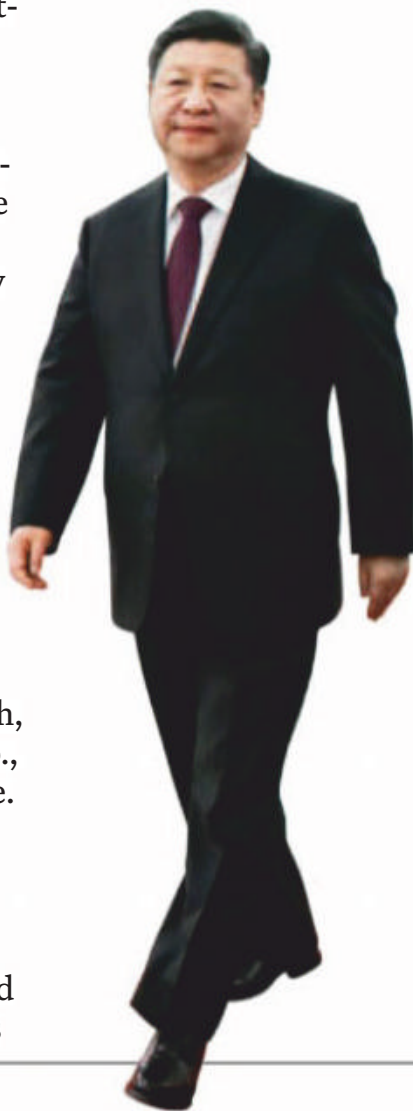
"This President fashions himself being of business and for business," says Ron Kirk, who served as U.S. Trade Representative under President Obama. "This would be a great time to sit down with those manufacturers, those business leaders."

If a deal doesn't come through and Trump refuses to change course, businesses may have to rethink long-term strategies. "We can't change macroeconomic conditions," Cook told investors.

Trump, however, can. Whether he wants to remains to be seen.

'No one is in a position to dictate to the Chinese people what should or should not be done.'

XI JINPING,
Chinese President





HISTORIC WIN Clemson quarterback Trevor Lawrence, center, celebrates after the Tigers beat the Alabama Crimson Tide in the College Football Playoff national championship at Levi's Stadium in Santa Clara, Calif., on Jan. 7. The Tigers dominated the previously undefeated Crimson Tide, 44-16—making Clemson the first major college football team to notch a 15-0 season in the modern era. Lawrence also became the second true freshman to win a national championship as a starting quarterback.

THE BULLETIN

The Democratic Republic of Congo sits on a knife edge as poll results are delayed

CONGOLESE CITIZENS WERE HOPING TO make history on Dec. 30, when they voted in presidential elections that should have marked Congo's first democratic transfer of power since it won independence from Belgium in 1960. But more than a week later, the electoral commission had refused to name a winner, sparking cries of foul play and fears of unrest.

FOLLOW THE LEADER Voters had plenty of frustration to vent at strongman President Joseph Kabila, who finally agreed in August to step down after 18 years in power. Dogged by corruption accusations, Kabila has failed to convert Congo's vast mineral wealth into prosperity for its 80 million people, nearly three-quarters of whom live in extreme poverty. Among the 14 members of his government under E.U. sanctions for serious human-rights abuses is Kabila's preferred successor, Interior Minister Emmanuel Ramazani Shadary. Unofficial polls by the Catholic Church showed Shadary far behind former oil executive Martin Fayulu and opposition-party leader Felix Tshisekedi.

POWER PLAY Opposition supporters say the government is trying to steal the election, after several reports of widespread irregularities at polling stations. Even before election day, the government barred 1.2 million voters in largely opposition-held eastern areas from participating, citing an outbreak of the Ebola virus that has killed over 330 since August and is still worsening. The electoral commission has told the public to "remain patient" while it finishes the count. But the Catholic Church, which sent 40,000 observers to polling stations, claimed it already knows the winner but stopped short of giving a name.

TICKING CLOCK The government has cut off Internet access and text-messaging services, leaving citizens in the dark as tension builds. A rigged election in 2011 led to violent protests. Such unrest would exacerbate ethnic conflicts already raging in the north-east and undermine health workers' efforts to contain Ebola. In Congo and beyond, observers are waiting to see if the delay is just a bump in the road or something more dangerous. —CIARA NUGENT

NEWS TICKER

Bolton adds condition to Syria plan

U.S. National Security Adviser John Bolton said on Jan. 6 that the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Syria, announced abruptly by President Trump in December, **is conditional on Turkey's pledging not to attack Washington's Kurdish allies there.** Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan called Bolton's remarks a "serious mistake."

Saudi woman appeals for asylum

Rahaf Mohammed al-Qunun, an 18-year-old **Saudi woman who flew to Thailand to escape her family in Kuwait,** was granted refugee status by the U.N. on Jan. 9. Qunun said she'd renounced Islam—a crime punishable by death in Saudi Arabia. Her asylum case has been referred to Australia.

U.S. carbon emissions spiked in 2018

Carbon emissions in the U.S. **rose by 3.4% last year, the biggest increase in eight years,** according to a Jan. 8 report from the Rhodium Group, an independent research group. The rise marks a change from recent years, when emissions fell as renewable energy became more popular.

NEWS TICKER

Manafort accused of sharing data with Russians

Former Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort **gave 2016 polling data to a business associate with ties to Russian intelligence**, according to a court document unsealed on Jan. 8—a filing that could prove key to the investigation into possible collusion between the campaign and Russia.

Hungarians rally against 'slave law'

At least 10,000 people marched in Budapest on Jan. 5 to **protest a labor reform that allows companies to demand up to 400 hours of overtime** from employees each year. Dubbed a "slave law" by critics, it has united trade unions and civic groups against Prime Minister Viktor Orban's right-wing government.

Investigation after woman in coma gives birth

The CEO of Hacienda HealthCare—an Arizona nursing home where a woman who has been in a vegetative state for over a decade **gave birth after being sexually assaulted**—resigned on Jan. 7. Police in Phoenix are seeking DNA from all male employees.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF

American teacher strikes—and where Los Angeles fits in

JUST AS STUDENTS RETURNED TO SCHOOL from their winter vacations, teachers in Los Angeles were ready to leave. Working in the second largest school district in the U.S., they were prepared to go on strike after failed negotiations in their quest for smaller class sizes, higher pay and increased funding for school counselors and nurses.

The Los Angeles dispute can be seen as a sign that the issues behind last year's wave of walkouts—education cuts and low teacher pay, among them—aren't resolved. But the story of teacher strikes in the U.S. goes back much further than that. Some historians have seen recent events as a resurgence of teacher activism that has roots in the 1960s and '70s.

In the first half of the 20th century, the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association maintained no-strike policies. But as teachers faced the perpetual problems of difficult working conditions and lack of support for public education—and as conditions improved for other unionized professions—many chapters ignored that practice. Teacher strikes started to occur with greater frequency. More than 50 such strikes took place from 1946 to 1949, up from only a dozen in the first half of that decade, according to the *Encyclopedia of U.S. Labor and Working-Class History*.

Teacher strikes picked up during the

next 30 years, even in the face of state laws that outlawed them. There were more than 1,000 such strikes involving more than 823,000 teachers from July 1960 to June 1974, according to the same encyclopedia. By the late 1970s, 72% of public-school teachers were covered by collective-bargaining agreements, and union membership soared.

Jon Shelton, an associate professor at the University of Wisconsin–Green Bay and author of *Teacher Strike! Public Education and the Making of a New American Political Order*, says several forces contributed to a spate of teacher strikes through the 1970s, including the fight for collective-bargaining rights, conflicts over inequality in segregated schools, and political and economic pressures that simultaneously forced districts to cut costs and unions to fight for increased wages.

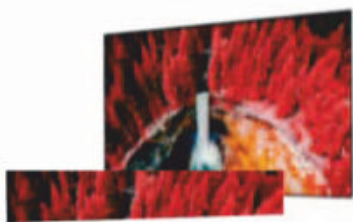
"In some cases, you had teacher strikes that lasted two and three months because the conflicts between the school districts and the teacher unions there were so pronounced," Shelton says.

In 1973, there were simultaneous teacher strikes in Chicago, St. Louis and Philadelphia—the last of which lasted nearly two months. In 1981, teachers in Ravenna, Ohio, concluded a five-month strike. In 1987, a teacher strike in the small town of Homer, Ill., came to a bitter end after eight months. To this day, it appears to hold the record for the longest teacher strike in U.S. history. But more than 30 years later, similar issues in Los Angeles reflect an unfinished battle over the rights and role of teachers. —KATIE REILLY

GADGETS

Promising products

The annual CES trade show in Las Vegas showcases thousands of products, some more useful than others. These three stood out to TIME tech columnist Patrick Lucas Austin:



A ROLL-UP TV

A huge TV is great for movie night but can be an eyesore the rest of the time. LG's 65-in. Signature OLED TV R fixes that with an innovative trick: the 3-mm-thick screen rolls into the TV's base when not in use.



SMART WEIGHTS

Almost everyone cheats a little when working out. Exercisers can keep themselves honest (and get better results) with JAXJOX's KettlebellConnect, a kettlebell with motion sensors to track lifts and lunges.



A FUTURE TOILET

Kohler's Numi 2.0 Intelligent Toilet packs everything expected of a high-end toilet, like a heated seat, and adds speakers and Amazon Alexa—so users can check the weather or the news while, well, you know.

TV: LG; WEIGHT: JAXJOX; TOILET: KOHLER

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TheBrief Milestones

REACHED

The **far side of the moon**, by China, on Jan. 3, the country reported. The landing by the Chang'e-4 probe was a first for the moon's far side.

MISSED

Supreme Court arguments, for the first time, by Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg on Jan. 7. Her absence came after she underwent surgery for cancer in December.

ABDICATED

The **Malaysian throne**, by Sultan Muhammad V, on Jan. 6. He is the first monarch in the country's history to give up his position.

ANNOUNCED

The resignation of World Bank president **Jim Yong Kim**, by the bank on Jan. 7. He will step down in February for a job at a private firm, more than three years before the end of his term.

CAUGHT

Two American citizens **accused of fighting for the Islamic State**, by Kurdish forces in Syria, the Syrian Democratic Forces said on Jan. 6.

PLEADED

Not guilty to charges of indecent assault and battery, by Kevin Spacey on Jan. 7. He is accused of groping an 18-year-old in 2016.

DIVORCING

Amazon CEO **Jeff Bezos—the richest person in the world—and his wife MacKenzie Bezos**, after 25 years together, the couple said in a statement on Jan. 9.



Kelleher, shown in 2005, was a prominent figure in the Dallas business community throughout his career

DIED

Herb Kelleher Soul of Southwest

By Robert Crandall

AS THE CO-FOUNDER AND CEO OF SOUTHWEST AIRLINES, HERB Kelleher—who died at 87 on Jan. 3—was my competitor, but he was also a nice guy. Since neither of us could see any point in being unpleasant, we developed a friendship during several years of growth for both Southwest and American Airlines.

In fact, we used to do gags back and forth. At one point Herb painted one of his airplanes like a whale and called it *Shamu*. I called him up and said, 'What are you gonna serve on this plane, whale-sh-t mousse?' A couple of days later, the phone rang in my office and the receptionist told me that somebody from Southwest came by and left me something. It was a pie pan of chocolate pudding with a little sign in the middle that said WHALE-SH-T MOUSSE. He had an effervescent sense of humor and liked to take ordinary situations and turn them into fun events if he could.

At the same time, he was running an airline that turned out to be a great success. He was a pioneer in low-cost air travel, boiling the business down to essentials. His underlying notion was that if you deliver a quality product and treat people well, customers will come back and employees will do their best. Herb was a man of great integrity. We need more leaders like him.

Crandall is a former president, CEO and chairman of American Airlines

GRANTED

Clemency for Cyntoia Brown

By Tarana Burke

WHEN WE TALK ABOUT survivors of sexual violence, there's a picture people tend to paint. They don't think about young women like Cyntoia Brown, who was pulled into sex work as a child and, at 16, found herself in a position where she took the life of somebody else to save her own. Now 30, she has spent nearly half her life in prison. It sounds unbelievable that a child who was trafficked would receive essentially a life sentence. But when you see someone like Cyntoia as an adult and a criminal, not as a child and a victim, your orientation to the crime is different.

If we're going to address the issue of sexual violence, people have to understand what we're dealing with. Talking about Cyntoia Brown opens up space to talk about what's happening under our noses, every day, all around us. It took a lot of work to get her this clemency, granted on Jan. 7 by outgoing Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam. It took organizing en masse to get one victory. But there are so many Cyntoia Browns around the country. My hope is that her story will shine a light on this problem.

Burke, a 2018 TIME 100 honoree, founded the #MeToo movement



KELLEHER: DAVID WOO—CORBIS/GETTY IMAGES; BROWN: LACY ATKINS—THE TENNESSEAN/AP



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—Client, Pottstown, Pennsylvania

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—Client, Plano, Texas

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—Arthur Frommer, Travel Editor

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Grand Tetons

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Actor **Keegan-Michael**

Key is veering off a funny path—just as he imagined

By **Eliza Berman**

KEEGAN-MICHAEL KEY IS GETTING ANIMATED while discussing the arc of his character Ethan in the Netflix series *Friends From College* when he's rudely interrupted. "Sorry, I couldn't find what you were looking for," says Alexa—she of the disembodied, faintly robotic voice programmed into Amazon's virtual assistant, who he'd failed to realize was eavesdropping. "It's fine, Alexa," Key sighs. "Stop, Alexa." Perceptive as she may be, she doesn't understand the nuances of human behavior quite like Key. During our conversation on a dreary January afternoon in a greenroom before a television interview, he references Aristotle, Konstantin Stanislavski and improv gurus Del Close and Keith Johnstone with a recall that belies the 22 years that have passed since he graduated with an M.F.A. in theater and began studying improv.

The minor mishap between computer and man could be part of an escalating bit from *Key & Peele*, the sketch-comedy show Key created with Jordan Peele that ran for five seasons on Comedy Central, winning two Emmys and a Peabody Award. For as much as the show was celebrated for its incisive social commentary, particularly about race in America, it also produced hours of absurdist vignettes that took quotidian events—like the interminable lineup of groups invited to board a plane before the average coach ticket holder—to illogical extremes: "old religious people with military babies," "Jason Schwartzman," "anyone with a blue suitcase."

Much has happened since that show aired its final season in 2015: Key and Peele amicably disentangled their professional lives, at least temporarily. Since then, Key has dug into meatier roles, playing Horatio onstage in *Hamlet*, examining his improv days in *Don't Think Twice* and (spoiler alert) getting decimated in *The Predator*. He's a busy voice actor (*Hotel Transylvania 2* and *3*, *The Star* and *Storks*, to name a few of his animated films), and you've probably seen him in various ads. In *Friends From College*, which returns for a second season on Jan. 11, Key's Ethan is one of six New York City pals, 20-ish years out from Harvard, whose nostalgia for the good old days interferes with their ability to live as mature, functional adults.

Unlike the flailing Ethan, who's exploded his marriage with an affair and traded his literary ambitions for a more commercially viable novel about a boy centaur, Key knows exactly what he's looking for. "When you stop seeing the borders of the

KEY QUICK FACTS

Prestigious pedigree

Key was a member of the Second City improv theater, first in Detroit and later in Chicago.

Anger management

At the 2015 White House Correspondents' Dinner, he appeared alongside Barack Obama as Luther, the measured President's "anger translator."

Broadway bonafides

Key made his Broadway debut in Steve Martin's 2017 comedy *Meteor Shower*.

television or cinema screen because you're relating to the character—that's what I'm trying to achieve. I want you for one minute, if you're [watching *Hamlet*], to be there with us, and then your chair creaks and you go, 'Oh, I'm in a theater.' It's those intangible moments of pure connection." To be clear: he wants these moments on the stage, on screens big and small, in all manner of genre and scope of project.

Key is underslept after a cross-country flight home to New York City from Los Angeles, where he spent the weekend at Golden Globes parties. (He wasn't nominated but has arrived at the inner circle that at least affords an invite.) But neither his eager forward lean nor his not-quite-manic but warmly enthusiastic demeanor suggests a trace of exhaustion. He answers questions academically, a philosopher-actor, and it's hard not to imagine that his perfect diction is a vestige of years spent perfecting soliloquies.

And they're years he's been trying to get back to: 18 months ago, while doing press for *Hamlet*, Key referred to his comedy days—*Key & Peele* and, before that, five years on *MADtv*—as a "19-year detour" from the path he'd intended to follow as a dramatic actor. But after some reflection, he sees the past two decades differently. "I'm officially now saying to you: it's time to retire the phrase *detour*." It's less about veering from the old plan or sticking to the new plan or any plan-based diet, for that matter. "I'm evolving to see that it was meant to be."

KEY DESCRIBES his current professional state as a "chrysalis," the adolescent stage of a butterfly. At 47, he's hardly at the beginning of his career, but he's still negotiating his reinvention. He sees *College*, a dramedy, falling somewhere on the bridge to a more expansive future as a performer.

When the show first came out in 2017, many critics found the characters' behavior too abhorrent to justify, let alone laugh at. Take, for example, Ethan's self-serving rationalizations for cheating on his wife (Cobie Smulders) as she undergoes grueling fertility treatments. But its cringiness clearly made it compulsively watchable for viewers, whether because of schadenfreude or some brave instinct to face down their own worst impulses. Ethan's flaws were what drew Key to the role. "To play that lack of reflection, you have to *know* what it is that he's not playing. You want people screaming at the TV, 'Why doesn't he realize X, Y and Z?!'"

Key was born near Detroit, adopted by two social workers and raised in what he describes as a Midwestern Catholic household. *Key & Peele* was heavily influenced by its creators' experiences growing up as what he describes as two biracial "blerds"—a term for black nerds. But until now, as perceptive as Key is about his creative process, there was another connection between his background and his work



that he hadn't yet made: like Ethan and his college fling, Key's biological parents had an affair, and he was conceived through that union. So does his own origin story help him to empathize with Ethan, whose behavior prompts strangers to approach Key on the street and call him a jerk?

"God, I had never given it any thought until right now." He takes a moment. "Clearly, that tells us something, doesn't it? O.K., so what are you locking away, Keegan?" he asks himself. "Maybe I'll use that in Season 3." (Alexa, remind Netflix to renew *Friends From College* for another season.)

The shift from sketch to character work is gratifying for a performer who relishes the Bard, and it's also a relief. "I don't know how we would do it," he says of a Trump-era *Key & Peele*, in part because the 24-hour Trumpian news cycle would present logistical challenges to producing material that stays fresh. But the show also traded in broad questions about, for example, the safety of a black man walking in a white neighborhood. It was never set up to pointedly criticize a leader like Donald Trump.

"There's always been megalomaniac tyrants. You could put Mussolini in the sketch, you could put Hitler in the sketch, you could put Trump in the

'It's time to retire the phrase detour. I'm evolving to see that it was meant to be.'

KEEGAN-MICHAEL KEY, on his unexpected path

sketch, you could put Vladimir Putin in the sketch." Key says. "The operating procedure for *Key & Peele* was: What are the characteristics of the tyrant that we can glean social comedy from?"

Key waits "with bated breath" for his next collaboration with Peele, which he says will be just a matter of time. In 2018, Peele won an Oscar for *Get Out*, the social thriller he wrote and directed. "Jordan's very tactical. He will be, in his mind, going, 'How do I win an Oscar for Keegan?'"

But before that, Key has two high-profile voice roles, in *Toy Story 4* (alongside Peele) and Disney's *The Lion King* remake (as a hyena). He's working with his wife Elisa Key—it's their seven-month anniversary the day we meet—on a spy script with "a racial component." When he speaks of his love for that genre, his eyes are narrow, his tone hushed: "I want to do period ones where there are no cell phones, so he has to meet her behind the bar: *The eagle has landed. The rhinoceros finds its toes.* And then you drop the microfiche in the garbage can." The glee passes like an electric charge through his tented fingers. And as it does, it becomes hard to discern what the detour was after all. But maybe the detours are the point. □





LightBox

Eyes on Iowa

Senator Elizabeth Warren speaks to supporters during an event in Des Moines, Iowa, on Jan. 5. The trip was her first to the Hawkeye State since she announced she would form an exploratory committee to consider running for President in 2020. Iowa's caucuses are by tradition and calendar the first test for presidential hopefuls. By jumping into the race early, the progressive Massachusetts Democrat already stands out in the crowd of Democrats hoping to face off against President Donald Trump.

Photograph by Gabriella Demczuk—The New York Times/Redux
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The View

CULTURE

WHEN BAD MEN MAKE GREAT ART

By Stephanie Zacharek

Bohemian Rhapsody, which won two Golden Globes on Jan. 6, may as well have been directed by a ghost. One of its producers, as he accepted the award for Best Motion Picture—Drama, avoided mentioning that director's name, just as its star had done earlier. If only the film had directed itself. It would've been so much more convenient. ▶

INSIDE

WHY A SUDDEN U.S. EXIT
FROM SYRIA
WOULD EMPOWER IRAN

HOW BITCOIN
CAN UNDERMINE
OPPRESSION

THE BIGGEST RISKS
THE WORLD FACES
IN 2019

TheView Opener

The man with the director's credit, Bryan Singer, was fired from *Bohemian Rhapsody* approximately two weeks before shooting had finished, reportedly for failing to show up on set on numerous occasions. But perhaps more significant was the news that broke just after Singer was fired: the filmmaker was facing a lawsuit connected with an allegation that he'd sexually assaulted a 17-year-old at a yacht party in 2003. That news—and rumors about Singer's predatory behavior in Hollywood, all of which he has denied—reinforced the filmmaker's place in an ever growing category in the world of entertainment: Singer is what we now call “problematic.”

If you've gone to the movies anytime in the past 30 years, you've probably encountered one of these problematic figures. And within just the past few months, you've probably heard about how Kevin Hart withdrew from hosting the Oscars after a series of homophobic tweets from 2010 and 2011 resurfaced, or about how comedian and actor Louis CK, accused of sexual harassment in 2017, has faced criticism as he attempts a comeback.

Now, as we round the final bend of the Oscars race, it's hardly surprising that no one involved with *Bohemian Rhapsody* wants to talk about Singer. A malignant form of common sense has taken hold: art made by allegedly bad people must be damned outright. Society, especially as reflected on social media, now demands that anyone who loves a film must do so with an asterisk.

CAVEATS OF THIS SORT are piling up, and as they do, they become the enemy of art, a specter force dogging even our initial unconscious response to a work, not to mention any more thoughtful and nuanced observation that might follow. If you've ever enjoyed a Bryan Singer movie—or a Woody Allen movie, or a Bernardo Bertolucci movie, or any movie produced by Harvey Weinstein—you had now better append at least one qualification to your reaction: “I liked [insert movie name here], but in no way do I condone the behavior of [insert name here].”

Instead of just processing what a film or a performance means, our declarations of love, or even just admiration, have become more like legal briefs, multipage documents with clauses and riders attached that must outweigh whatever we appreciated about the work itself—and there's always someone ready to call out a perceived sin of omission.

No one wants to be seen as granting approval to either known or accused abusers, rapists or pedophiles. And it's normal to feel some aggravation when we see these people—



In *Bohemian Rhapsody*, Rami Malek, center, portrays the late Queen front man Freddie Mercury

even if their alleged crimes are as yet unproven—continuing to get work. We're hardwired, maybe, to want our artists to deserve our respect and the movie-going dollars we funnel toward them. It's impossible to divorce our feelings about an artist from things we heard he did.

But while I don't feel comfortable with the rumors I've heard about Singer, when I look at *Bohemian Rhapsody*, I don't see some pure auteurist vision. I see a creation that works because a bunch of musicians and choreographers, lighting technicians and camera-people, not to mention actors, knew what they were doing and believed in it. All big-budget movies bear the fingerprints of many hands, including those of a director. But art is alchemy. There's so much that can go wrong, and also a million and one nearly imperceptible elements that have to somehow go right.

These days I don't feel comfortable with much of anything, except the word *uncomfortable*. The wrestling comes with the territory; stasis is death. Even deeply imperfect artists are capable of delighting viewers, or of making us see darkness in ourselves. It's hard work to be a moral custodian every moment, but it's even harder, and far more worthwhile, to acknowledge darkness and light at once, in or surrounding the same film—or painting or book or piece of music. Nuance and complexity, and the hope that a work will open some previously hidden door inside us, are part of what draw us to art in the first place. Reckoning with contradiction is what makes us most alive—if only because it requires more energy than simply registering our disapproval. □

SHORT READS

► Highlights from stories on time.com/ideas

When American troops leave

Lina Khatib, of the think tank Chatham House, argues that **U.S. soldiers' quickly exiting Syria would undermine a Trump promise:** to contain Iran's influence. Khatib writes that the Administration may assume a U.S. withdrawal would weaken Russia and others' ties with Iran—but would actually “give Iran time and space to consolidate its presence.”

Freedom money

People living under authoritarian regimes have started to recognize the potential of Bitcoin, writes the Human Rights Foundation's Alex Gladstein, pointing to groups in China and Venezuela that use the cryptocurrency to avoid tight financial controls.

The upside of the moon

TIME's Jeffrey Kluger hopes that **China's putting a lander and rover on the dark side of the moon**—a region that until then was untouched—will inspire a new era of international space competition and “focus the American mind on space once again.”

THE RISK REPORT

The top 10 risks for 2019 suggest a gathering storm

By Ian Bremmer



THE GEOPOLITICAL environment is the most dangerous it's been in decades, and yet the global economy is mostly doing well. What's

wrong with this picture? Nothing ... yet. While the most serious risks, such as cyberwar with Russia or military confrontation with Iran, are more plausible than they've been, none are particularly likely to play out in 2019. But we are heading for serious longer-term trouble down the road. That's the first of my Eurasia Group's top 10 risks this year:

1. BAD SEEDS TAKE ROOT

2019 is the year "bad seeds" are being planted that will eventually threaten the entire global order. Examples? The transatlantic alliance, NATO, the European Union, the G-20, the World Trade Organization, U.S.-China, Russia and the West ... none of these will explode this year, but every one of them is headed in the wrong direction.

2. U.S. VS. CHINA

The U.S.-China relationship is broken, and even a truce in the trade war won't fix it. Trust between the two sides is almost gone. The U.S. agrees China poses threats. The Chinese believe they can't afford to back down. Both sides will work to make themselves less vulnerable to the other by reducing the connections that bind them together.

3. THE CYBERGLOVES ARE OFF

There are still no realistic rules of the road to help avoid cyberconflict. It's hard to halt an attack. You can't tell who's shooting at you. Your cyber-defenses fast become obsolete. And 2019 will be the year the U.S. government goes on offense.

4. POPULISM MARCHES ON IN EUROPE

The E.U. will hold parliamentary elections in May, and populists will score



a victory that will help them challenge current European policy on migration, trade and enforcement of E.U. rules inside member states.

5. THE U.S. AT HOME

Infighting in Washington will be especially intense in 2019. Trump will face challenges from House Democrats, the media, the courts, and investigations of his Administration, his campaign, his businesses and his family. Trump will return fire, raising the risk of a constitutional crisis.

6. THE WINTER OF OUR INNOVATION

Security fears persuade governments to avoid foreign suppliers. Privacy concerns lead them to tightly regulate how citizens' data can be used. Economic worries lead them to build barriers to protect their firms against foreign competitors. We see these trends in U.S.-China relations, but also in Europe, Japan, Brazil, India and even California. Innovation depends on cooperation. Expect less of that in 2019.

7. COALITION OF THE UNWILLING

Donald Trump now has imitators in Italy's Matteo Salvini and Brazil's Jair Bolsonaro. Russia's Vladimir Putin and North Korea's Kim Jong Un have tactical reasons to promote the U.S. President. Saudi Arabia's Mohammed bin Salman

and Israel's Bibi Netanyahu need his support. These leaders don't salute a common flag, but each will bolster Trump's challenge to the status quo.

8. A LEFTIST IN MEXICO

New President Andrés Manuel López Obrador is popular, but his bid to roll back macroeconomic policies, privatization and deregulation threaten a return to the 1960s. In 2019, he'll spend money Mexico doesn't have on problems like poverty and security that resist straightforward solutions.

9. TENSIONS IN UKRAINE

Ukraine will hold a presidential election in March and a parliamentary vote in the fall. Russia will interfere to a far greater degree than in U.S. and European elections. Each has political incentives to pick fights with the other. Though both want to limit their battles, conflict can take on a life of its own.

10. NIGERIA ON A KNIFE EDGE

If the ineffective President Muhammadu Buhari wins this year's fiercely contested election, much-needed reforms must wait and militant attacks will worsen. His opponent, Atiku Abubakar, wants mainly to enrich himself and his allies in office. The wild-card risk: an inconclusive result, followed by violence and chaos.

Nation

M O N U M E N T A L

*Trash accumulates in Washington
amid a federal-government shutdown*

PHOTOGRAPH BY WIN MCNAMEE



F A I L U R E

**Trump vs.
Pelosi: the
battle begins**

By Molly Ball

**What the
shutdown fight
means for the
rest of his term**

By Brian
Bennett and
Tessa Berenson

**The
Democrats'
probes could
determine
Trump's
future—and
their own**

By Alana
Abramson

The stakes of the showdown

The first battle between President Trump and Speaker Nancy Pelosi will shape the new balance of power in Washington

By Molly Ball

A NEW YEAR HAS DAWNED IN WASHINGTON, AND THIS IS what it looks like: a partial government shutdown in its third week; a new Congress sworn in only to sit on its hands; an emboldened House Speaker Nancy Pelosi refusing to cede an inch; and an angry President Donald Trump abandoning negotiations to take to television and make the case for crisis measures. Federal offices and museums are shuttered. Trash is piling up in national parks. Airport-security personnel are working without pay. Recipients of housing aid are wondering if they'll soon be evicted.

But step back from the sordid details, and you could hardly get a more accurate tableau of America's new political reality: a nonfunctioning federal government whose leaders, each insisting the stakes are too high to budge, have retreated to their corners. At the center of the drama are the two towering figures whose clash will define the next biennium: Trump and Pelosi, the yang and yin of a divided America, two powerful leaders with their credibility on the line, both convinced they hold the winning hand.

Neither can afford to lose. Trump has, after two years of distraction and delay, finally called the question of his signature policy promise, a wall on the southern border, which he insists must be a literal barrier made of concrete or steel. The wall is unpopular with the public and disdained by experts on both sides of the immigration debate. But the President is obsessed with playing to his hard-core base of supporters—and with his own self-image as a dominant alpha male—and caving would be an epic humiliation that could render him a premature lame duck and weaken his position ahead of a tough re-election campaign. Trump has been, if you will, pushed to the wall.

Pelosi takes up the first battle of her new speakership with a fired-up Democratic majority that saw the midterm results as a mandate to take on Trump and a repudiation of his stance on immigration, which he made the focus of in the election's closing days. The San Francisco Congresswoman is legendary for her legislative savvy, having recently stamped out murmurs of dissent in her ranks. But that may be less of an asset with an outsider President who ignores traditional incentives. Trump has insisted that unpaid federal workers aren't really bothered and even suggested he'd keep the government shuttered for months or even years. How does even the savviest negotiator

deal with a President with such an unusual tolerance for conflict, uncertainty and the suffering of others?

THE FIRST OVAL OFFICE ADDRESS of Trump's presidency had the feel of a defensive maneuver. On the night of Jan. 8, he raced woodenly through a prepared text, sounding a familiar note: that migration from Mexico constitutes an urgent national-security threat. "This is a humanitarian crisis, a crisis of the heart and a crisis of the soul," he intoned, as the camera zoomed in on his face. The President reportedly didn't want to give the prime-time address, but his advisers convinced him that making the argument to the public was his best hope to shift the momentum of a fight he seemed to be losing.

The next day in the Senate, the President tried to make the sale to his own party, where cracks were beginning to show. The GOP leader, Mitch McConnell, had insisted that no bill to break the impasse would be considered without Trump's endorsement. But purple-state Republicans had begun to voice public support for the Democrats' position of reopening the government without allocating money for a border barrier. These Senators know that experts believe a physical wall isn't feasible or effective on some areas of the border; that the wall has never enjoyed majority support in public opinion polls; and that illegal cross-border migration has dipped to historically low levels, replaced by a humanitarian crisis of asylum seekers hindered by the Trump Administration's zero-tolerance policies, some of which courts have ruled unlawful. With the House in Democratic hands, the President can hardly afford an erosion of support in the Republican-controlled Senate.

Trump spent two years content to punt on the wall, sometimes telling his cheering crowds it was already under construction, sometimes declaring himself content with other solutions. This time, Trump could have pivoted from the dismal midterm result to a new posture of bipartisanship; he could have sought a bargain like the one Democrats offered him a year ago, in which undocumented immigrants brought to the U.S. as children would get citizenship in exchange for a wall-funding subsidy as large as \$25 billion. In the past, he's repeatedly been talked out of forcing a shutdown, most recently in late September, when White House and Capitol Hill advisers successfully pleaded with him not to insert more drama into the height of the political season and Supreme Court confirmation hearings for Brett Kavanaugh. In December, he nearly allowed himself to be diverted again, tweeting that border security had already improved and "the military" would be building the wall as the Senate unanimously passed wall-free government funding. But after an outcry from the right, Trump reversed himself and finally got the fight he wanted.

Democrats, for their part, tried once before to use



a shutdown to force a popular change in immigration policy, but last time they lost their nerve after just a few days. That was before Pelosi was in charge of the House. Now, Democrats believe they already did all the compromising they needed to last year. Pelosi has unified her caucus and Senate Democrats, led by Chuck Schumer, behind her hardball strategy. In an awkward tag-team response to Trump's address, the two Democrats stood before a row of American flags and argued that Trump was "holding the American people hostage" with a manufactured crisis. If Pelosi's nerve falters and she cedes ground, she would immediately risk losing the confidence of the fractious caucus she's labored to control. But if she succeeds in her standoff with Trump, it will be an important moment in Washington, a signal that Congress, which has spent the past two years kowtowing to the President, now has the power to thwart him. That momentum would carry forward into numerous investigations the House is preparing to unleash.

Trump didn't invent Washington gridlock. Plenty of other moments in his presidency have felt equally do-or-die, only to be subsumed and forgotten amid the next high-stakes crisis. Hours before Trump's

^
*The President
 took to prime
 time to make a
 statesman's case
 for his border
 measures*

Oval Office address, new evidence emerged of his former campaign chairman's communications with an aide the FBI has linked to Russian intelligence. At the end of the month, the President, assuming he can afford to fuel up Air Force One, is scheduled to travel to the annual meeting of economic elites in Davos, Switzerland, where he'll confront the world order he continues to jumble and destabilize, an arguably bigger deal than nine shuttered government departments.

Perhaps it was inevitable that a President whose Administration has been in a state of virtual breakdown since its Inauguration should preside over the government itself grinding to a halt. Trump, true to his tendencies, acts on impulse, prevaricates, shreds norms and takes unilateral actions of questionable legality. He stumbles into authoritarianism, not out of calculation but out of machismo. Meanwhile, the Speaker, true to her tendencies, unites her wayward party behind a carefully chosen, logical course of action, but her best-laid plans may still be no match for an extraordinary moment. Ultimately, it is fitting that Trump, avatar of chaos, should face off against Pelosi, master of rules. And there's no end in sight for the clash of these two titanic figures. □

It's not just about the wall. It's about Trump's future

By Brian Bennett and Tessa Berenson

DONALD TRUMP'S GUESTS HAD barely settled into their seats in the Oval Office for negotiations to end the federal government shutdown when the President went on the attack. He would not budge below the more than \$5 billion he had demanded for a border wall, he told Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi on Jan. 4. He was happy to keep the government partly shuttered for months or even years, he said. And then he really went off. "Why don't you use this for impeachment?" Trump shot at Pelosi, according to his own account of the conversation.

Pelosi, who had assumed formal control of the House the day before, told him they weren't there to discuss that. But the moment was a tell. Trump knows that more is at stake in his negotiations with Democrats than funding for the "big, beautiful wall" he promised on the campaign trail. In a city obsessed with power, there is a new balance of forces in Washington. And the funding battle has escalated into a fight over who will have the upper hand.

If Trump wins, the White House sees a chance to divide his Democratic critics ahead of a fractious presidential primary, blunt their efforts to use investigations to weaken him and strengthen his hand on the legislative front. On the flip side, White House officials fear any concession on Trump's signature campaign promise heightens the danger from oversight probes and makes it harder to work together on

measures Trump has endorsed, such as reducing drug prices and increasing spending on transportation and infrastructure needs.

In many ways this is a battle Trump himself has chosen to fight on an issue aides say he cares about deeply. Politics has always been a zero-sum game for him. The difference now is that he faces a powerful opponent—and he has a lot more to lose.

IT DIDN'T HAVE to be this way. In December, Trump signaled he was open to signing a temporary government-funding package that didn't include border-wall money, which passed the Senate unanimously and looked set to sail through the House to his desk. But then, under fire from right-wing commentators, Trump reversed himself. After a last-minute scramble in Congress failed, about a quarter of the federal government ceased to function, just in time for Christmas.

Trump's challenge only became starker as the Democrats took control of the House in January, so he turned to the bully pulpit in search of victory. The President surprised a group of immigration officers and Border Patrol agents in an Oval Office meeting Jan. 3, insisting they describe the need for a border wall directly to the White House press corps and walking them onto the briefing-room podium.

The next day, after his feisty meeting with Pelosi and Schumer, Trump abruptly decided to hold an hourlong news conference on a chilly afternoon in the Rose Garden, during which he said he would consider the extraordinary step of using



emergency powers to build a border wall if Democrats refused to fund one. Trump pressed his case in his first ever prime-time Oval Office address on Jan. 8 and planned a trip to the Texas-Mexico border later that week.

Trump's team has argued that the President is protecting American citizens from violence and terrorism. "I believe we made progress in establishing the fact that we do have a humanitarian and security crisis at our southern border," Vice President Mike Pence told a small group of reporters on Jan. 7 of his meetings with Democrats. Pence confirmed that the White House counsel's office is "looking at" ways to legally use emergency funding for a wall. "There's a real sense of urgency," echoed Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen. "The crisis is getting worse."

Behind the scenes, however, there are few signs that these arguments are swaying Trump's opponents. During discussions over the weekend of Jan. 5–6, more than 40 aides from the White House and



<
 Pelosi and
 Trump face
 off in the Oval
 Office on Dec. 11
 as Vice President
 Mike Pence and
 top Democratic
 Senator Chuck
 Schumer look on

both parties on the Hill tried to hammer out a deal in Pence's office. Democrats grilled Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner over the exact parameters of Trump's position. When Pence arrived on Jan. 6, nearly an hour late, he brought a three-page outline of White House demands, which extended beyond wall funding to include more money to hire immigration officers and Border Patrol agents and added bed space for immigration detention facilities. Democrats were unmoved. Then, on Jan. 9, Trump ended a Situation Room meeting with Schumer and Pelosi when the Speaker said she wouldn't agree to fund his wall.

The stakes are rising. Some 800,000 employees across nine federal departments and multiple agencies have been furloughed or working without pay since Dec. 22. If the two sides don't come to an agreement by Jan. 11, many workers won't get a paycheck. Federal housing subsidies for the poorest Americans are in question, national parks are straining to continue operations, and airport officials have

raised security concerns as some Transportation Security Administration screeners have declined to show up for work. If the impasse stretches to Jan. 12, it will become the longest government shutdown on record.

For now, Trump is taking the brunt of the blame in polls. Some 51% of Americans think Trump bears "most" of the responsibility, according to an early-January Reuters/Ipsos poll, up 4 percentage points from a similar poll run in late December. Even among Republicans, Trump's actions aren't as popular as his policy: 77% of Republicans support a border barrier, but just 54% say they support Trump shutting the government over it.

Democrats are confident Trump's PR offensive won't win over the public. Both sides worry that caving on this issue will set the power dynamic for the next two years. Which means this shutdown may set its own kind of precedent. —With reporting by ALANA ABRAMSON, MOLLY BALL and PHILIP ELLIOTT/WASHINGTON

House Democrats gird to fight Trump. And each other

By Alana Abramson

ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE 116TH CONGRESS, newly elected House Speaker Nancy Pelosi declared a set of principles for divided government. For the first time, House Democrats have the power to investigate the Trump Administration, and Pelosi wanted to tell the nation her party would act responsibly. In a speech on the House floor, she emphasized trust, duty and bipartisanship. She quoted Ronald Reagan and paid homage to George H.W. Bush. And she did not once mention President Donald Trump.

The message did not last a day. That afternoon, Democratic Representative Brad Sherman took the floor and reintroduced articles of impeachment against Trump. Then, at a reception for the liberal group MoveOn.org that night, incoming Representative Rashida Tlaib greeted activists with a message very different from Pelosi's sober promises. "We're gonna go in there," she announced to the cheering crowd, "and we're gonna impeach the motherf-cker."

It was exactly the tone Pelosi and her lieutenants were determined to avoid as the Trump presidency enters a new chapter, and top Democrats were apoplectic. "We couldn't even make it 24 hours in the majority before we did something so transparently partisan," complained a chief of staff to one House Democrat.

It's not that Pelosi and her aides favor politesse over throwing punches; it's about the effective use of newfound power. Interviews with five new House committee chairs and a dozen congressional aides and experts

advising them reveal a broad and detailed Democratic plan to investigate the Trump Administration on everything from its deregulation of the financial-services industry to its family-separation policy at the U.S.-Mexico border and to pursue the ongoing probe into Russian meddling in the 2016 presidential election.

Pelosi and these top Democrats, as well as veterans of past House investigations, believe the appearance of partisanship will undermine the effort. “If they abuse those powers,” says former Representative Henry Waxman, who led the Oversight Committee during the George W. Bush Administration, “they will have no credibility.” And that, in turn, could jeopardize the Democrats’ chances for more political power down the road.

It’s a tricky balance. Democrats won the House last November by running on kitchen-table issues like lowering health care costs and prescription-drug prices. But the party also harnessed the enthusiasm of a base of voters who now want to impeach Trump regardless of the consequences. Pelosi and her team have to legislate, investigate Trump methodically and credibly, all while accommodating the demands of a restive Democratic base and some of their own colleagues.

How they manage that challenge will shape the balance of power in Congress and potentially the race for the White House in 2020.

ON A WEDNESDAY in October, with election victory in sight, Pelosi gathered a group of senior Democrats in her conference room on the second floor of the Capitol to formulate a plan for 2019. One by one, she asked the ranking members of top committees how they intended to investigate the conduct and policies of the Trump Administration.

Congressional oversight of the Executive Branch goes way back. Article I of the Constitution mandates, “All legislative Powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States.” Because the law applies to everyone, including those in government, the clause gives Congress the authority to convene hearings and summon witnesses and to issue subpoenas and ferret out misconduct in order to effectively discharge its

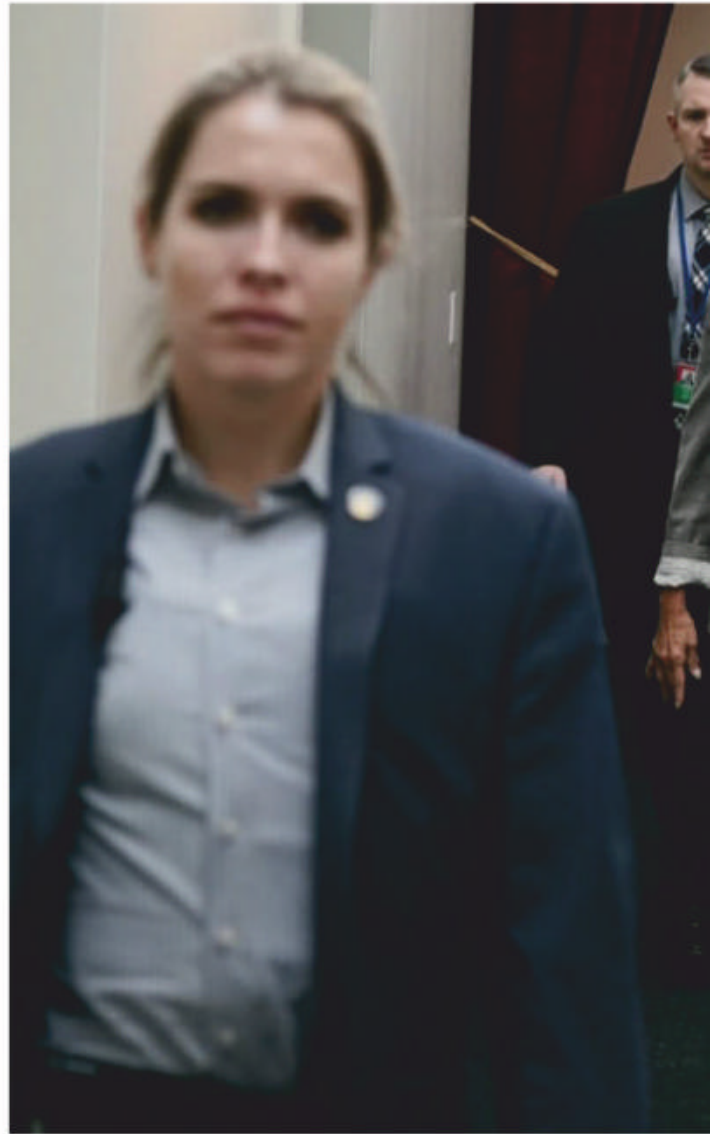
lawmaking responsibilities.

The first congressional investigation of the Executive Branch took place in 1792, after Major General Arthur St. Clair and his U.S. Army troops were defeated by Native American tribes in what is now Ohio. In 1795, Congress began compelling witnesses to give testimony. Subpoenas became routine in the first half of the following century.

Congress rarely performs its role as executive watchdog as diligently when one party has control of both branches. But Democrats say the GOP has been particularly lax during the Trump presidency. As ranking member of what is now called the House Committee on Oversight and Reform, Maryland Democrat Elijah Cummings sent 64 requests for subpoenas over the past two years to his Republican counterparts. None went out.

Republicans did send letters of inquiry to Trump Administration officials and members of the Trump Organization. But they didn’t follow up when there were no answers. Cummings’ first act was to re-send 51 of those letters from his Republican colleagues. “It’s a different situation now,” he said. “The American people have spoken.” Recipients of those letters included Trump attorney Sheri Dillon and Trump Organization executive George Sorial. They received requests about the company’s process for identifying payments from foreign governments and entities—part of a lawsuit Democrats filed alleging that Trump has violated the emoluments clause of the Constitution, which prohibits anyone holding public office from receiving foreign gifts or payments. White House counsel Pat Cipollone was asked to turn over documents related to staffers’ use of personal emails. Former White House chief of staff John Kelly was asked for documents outlining the security-clearance process.

In an interview in his new House office, still strewn with detritus from his recent move, the Judiciary Committee’s Jerrold Nadler laid out his top priority: protecting special counsel Robert Mueller’s probe. On the first day of the new Congress, Nadler introduced legislation to codify Mueller’s protection from termination. Even if it can’t pass the GOP-controlled Senate, Nadler has other ways to ensure



that the nation finds out whatever Mueller learns. He says he will subpoena the Attorney General for Mueller’s final report if it is never publicized and, if necessary, bring in Mueller himself for public testimony. “I think it’s imperative that the Mueller report, when he issues it, be a public report,” he says.

Representative Adam Schiff, the new chair of the House Intelligence Committee, plans to continue the investigation into Russian meddling that his GOP colleagues dropped last year. Schiff is coy about what that will entail. “I don’t want to telegraph exactly what we’re looking at,” he explains, drinking an iced tea in the basement of the Capitol. But the Californian told TIME the committee might summon people like former White House strategist Steve Bannon, who asserted executive privilege when called before the committee last year. And the Russia investigation is not Schiff’s sole focus. Among other matters, he says, Intelligence will assess the legitimacy of President Trump’s claims that North Korea is on the path to denuclearization and



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 Newly elected
 Speaker Nancy
 Pelosi arrives
 for a House
 Democratic
 caucus meeting
 at the Capitol on
 Jan. 9

examine the U.S. relationship with China.

The Democrats' oversight power can be even more effective outside the Executive Branch. Representative Maxine Waters sent letters to executives at Deutsche Bank in 2017, demanding documents related to the Russia money-laundering scheme for which New York authorities assessed penalties of over \$425 million in January 2017. Before she took over the Financial Services Committee, she was ignored. "Now that I am the chair," Waters says, "we think we might encourage them to do a better response." She also wants to explore former Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort's relationship with Deutsche Bank.

Even committees that don't typically focus on oversight have found a role to play. Representative Richard Neal, chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, may use his authority to request Trump's tax returns from Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin. Frank Pallone, chairman of the Energy and Commerce Committee, plans to

examine how the EPA has been trying to dismantle Obama-era policies. "A lot of that stuff he can't actually do," Pallone says.

ALL THESE PROBES match the wish lists of the Democratic base. In that sense, the House Democratic leaders' plans dovetail with the hopes of their constituents. But there is a fault line running under the boldest step the party can take to check the President: impeachment.

Fully 77% of Democratic voters say they want President Trump to be impeached immediately, according to CNN exit polling from November. Representative Al Green has also brought forward an impeachment resolution that received 58 votes in December 2017 and noted at the time he was surprised by the level of support. "This is the first vote, but it will not be the last," he said. The pressure on Democratic leaders to initiate impeachment proceedings will only increase as the investigations unearth new facts and the party's 2020 presidential primary gets under way.

But House Democratic leaders are convinced that impeaching Trump without ample evidence—or even appearing eager to do so—would be a political disaster. In 1998, one month before House Republicans officially impeached Democratic President Bill Clinton, his party bucked a historical trend by picking up congressional seats in a midterm election. "We need to follow the facts," Nadler wrote on Twitter the day after Tlaib's comments. "I know [Tlaib] agrees."

Even Waters, the only House Democratic committee chair who has publicly called for impeachment, has concluded that the Democrats shouldn't rush into it. "We know the kind of work that has to go into impeachment," she says. "Because we say that he's eligible for impeachment doesn't mean we think it should be done within 24 hours."

Asked if he is preparing for the possibility of impeachment hearings, Nadler—who would oversee them if they occurred—described a three-pronged "test." First, the wrongdoing must be an impeachable offense, which Nadler defines as an attack on democratic institutions and the rule of law. Second, the offense must be so grave as to require removing the person from office. Third, the evidence must be convincing enough that the public is behind it. "If the President perjured himself about his participation or somebody else's participation in his connivance in trying to rig the election, that would be an impeachable offense," Nadler explains. "If he perjured himself about a private sexual affair or about some business deal, that would not be an impeachable offense."

Most of the caucus agrees with this methodical approach—at least publicly. But it won't take too many comments like Tlaib's for Republicans to paint the Democrats' oversight efforts as politically motivated. That not only weakens the Democrat's legislative efforts, Pelosi believes, but imperils the party's re-election prospects. "I still believe our majority is fragile," says Cummings. "They voted for us to be a check and a balance, but they also voted for us to stand up for their problems."

To do that, though, the Democrats will first have to deal with their own. —With reporting by PHILIP ELLIOTT/WASHINGTON



The class of 2019 looks more like America

Photographs by Jeff Brown for TIME

THE RECORD NUMBER OF WOMEN SWORN INTO Congress on Jan. 3 included a 68-year-old bison farmer from West Virginia, a 29-year-old progressive upstart from New York and a 58-year-old Native American single mother from New Mexico. Each had broken ground in her own way, but in the Capitol building where they now work, that's less likely to make any of them terribly distinctive. The newest members of the 116th Congress made the legislative body the most diverse in U.S. history not only ethnically and racially but generationally as well. More than 20% of the new lawmakers are millennials, making this a particularly fresh-faced freshman class. On the pages that follow, a handful of them express their determination to make a difference in Washington by restoring a level of cooperation, effectiveness and mutual respect to the work they were elected to do.

—Reported by Abigail Abrams, Alana Abramson and Charlotte Alter

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez

Democrat, New York's 14th District

'The experiences that shaped my political ideology the most are my life experiences as a vulnerable working-class American ... When you really understand and internalize the intensity and the urgency that most Americans are going through, you approach this job totally differently.'



Mikie Sherrill

Democrat, New Jersey's 11th District

"I've been a working mom for many, many years, so having that pressure in my life ... has always been there. But I think it's changed now because I'm really modeling for my kids what it means to stand up for your values. What it means when you're concerned about your country, that you stand up and do something."



Josh Hawley

Republican, Missouri's junior Senator

"Younger folks don't hear anybody talk about the future anymore. It's all about battles of the past ... They want to know how are they going to be able to afford college, how are they going to get a good job, what kind of future is there going to be for them in this country?"



Kevin Cramer

Republican, North Dakota's junior Senator

"The Senate is the great equalizer for a small state. In the House, you're an at-large member ... political capital takes longer to build up ... In the Senate, you wake up in the morning with a great deal of political capital, but you still have to be judicious about how you spend it."



Lauren Underwood

Democrat, Illinois's 14th District

"We have this huge influx of new voices, new ideas and perspectives that have not really ever been heard in this body in the centuries that the United States has been on this earth ... We are going to see changes in process, we're going to see changes in policy. And hopefully transparency and productivity."



Dan Crenshaw

Republican, Texas' Second District

'I think what people in Congress maybe need to do is to just put their good relationships in public every once in a while. It wouldn't be that hard because they've already got them. People don't realize that ... There's plenty on the other side I could be friends with.'

Deb Haaland

Democrat, New Mexico's First District

'I want my constituents to know and realize that the door is open, the ceiling is broken now. So I intend to leave the ladder down. I want other Native women, women of color and women to run for office ... And I'll be there to make sure that they do.'



Katie Porter

Democrat, California's 45th District

"So many of the problems and challenges people told me about are not going to be solved without tackling campaign-finance reform first. So the high cost of prescription drugs, health care, consumer protection, a lot of these issues we can't make any progress until we do meaningful campaign-finance reform."



Antonio Delgado

Democrat, New York's 19th District

"The job is to act, to do ... We've got children and generations coming up behind us who need answers, they need solutions. They don't need bickering, they don't need arguing, they don't need headlines. They need actual substantive critical thought."



Carol Miller

Republican, West Virginia's Third District

“The first eight years I was in the state legislature, I served in the minority. That’s when I learned that you take it by the issue and you make friends and you meet people and you understand where you come together and you get things passed.”



Rashida Tlaib

Democrat, Michigan's 13th District

“It’s O.K. that I hate it a little bit here. I think that’s important. People think it’s crazy when I say it. But I’m like, If I’m too much in love with just being here ... then I’ll be disconnected and I’ll forget why I ran in the first place.”



Max Rose

Democrat, New York's 11th District

“The problems that we face in my district are quite simple. Takes people two hours to get to work. People are dying from overdoses. Kids are afraid to go to school because of gun violence. And I don’t believe that shy incrementalism is necessarily the answer here. We have to be responsible, but we need to be bold.”

World SACRED MISSION

Entry to a shrine in South India has sparked
a national battle over women's rights

By Rohini Mohan/Kerala

SLUMPED LOW IN THE BACK SEAT OF AN SUV, the two women switch on their cell phones. They had turned them off to avoid tracking, but the friend taking them to their third safe house in three days says it's safe to use them en route. It is the first time the women have been able to call home in more than a week—a week in which they have found themselves on the front line of a gender-equality battle raging in the southern Indian state of Kerala.

At about 3 a.m. on Jan. 2, 40-year-old law professor Bindu Ammini and 39-year-old government supplies officer Kanakadurga Koylandi (both go by their first name) entered the Lord Ayyappa temple in Sabarimala, Kerala. They became the first women to officially do so since the Supreme Court overturned a long-standing ban in September that prevented women of “menstruating age,” defined as ages 10 to 50, from entering the temple.

Thought to date back to before the 12th century, the Hindu temple receives more than 5 million visitors a year, making it the site of one of the largest annual



Above: Sabarimala temple in southern Kerala; opposite: Bindu, left, and Kanakadurga were the first women to officially enter the shrine

pilgrimages in the world. Before they make the steep barefoot trek to Sabarimala, pilgrims forgo sex and avoid meat and leather in honor of celibate deity Lord Ayyappa.

Since the Supreme Court verdict, the Kerala government says about 4,200 women have booked online for a visit. Unconfirmed reports suggest eight other women have entered the temple since Jan. 1. Outraged male protesters surrounding the temple have threatened to beat up women entering and chased them away. After Bindu and Kanakadurga entered, the head priest shut the temple doors for a “purification ceremony.” Across Kerala, mobs claiming to be offended devotees have damaged buses, burned effigies and thrown stones and crude bombs in the streets. With one man dead and hundreds injured, police have arrested more than 5,700 people.

Many Hindus regard menstruating women as “impure,” but most temples allow women to enter as long as they are not on their period. The Sabarimala temple is one of the few that ban all women of



menstruating age. In response to a 2006 petition spearheaded by female lawyers, the highest court of India declared that the Sabarimala rule violated the constitutional right to equality. Protesters say Bindu and Kanakadurga have defiled the temple, while the Communist-led government of Kerala hails them as heroes.

In India, the fight for women's equality exists on several fronts. In 2012, after a young medical student was brutally raped and murdered in Delhi, a massive uprising focused on women's safety and public opposition to stronger rape laws. In the past year, the #MeToo movement came to India as women in media, entertainment and academia demanded safer workplaces. Recognizing the climate, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's central government has been proactively advertising programs for women's education and menstrual health. But with a high-profile case of a Kerala nun accusing a Catholic priest of rape, and now Sabarimala, women's rights activists are facing one of their toughest battlefields: religion.

WITH NATIONAL ELECTIONS expected to take place in April and May, the protests have turned into an ideological battle between the right and the left. The most vocal protesters are affiliated with Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which historically had little political sway in Kerala, a highly literate region of the country with large Hindu, Muslim and Christian communities. But now the BJP has found a way to move into Kerala politics, arguing that women entering the temple violates Hindu tradition.

Meanwhile, Communist state leader Pinarayi Vijayan has promised to enforce the court verdict and provide police protection for female devotees visiting the temple. Parties in his left coalition, often criticized for being male bastions, are espousing feminist values as never before. On Jan. 1, they led 5 million women, many of them state employees, in forming a "women's wall." They are also planning a two-day celebration of menstruation as "not impure, but pure."

At the center of the politicking, the two women who entered the temple have been forced into hiding. On the evening of Jan. 4, the night they are allowed to turn their phones on, Bindu calls her husband Hariharan and 12-year-old daughter, who

have had to move out of their home after protesters and journalists surrounded it. "I'm so proud of my wife and of Kanakadurga," Hariharan tells TIME over the phone. "They have paved a way for many other women to express their faith."

Kanakadurga has no such support. Her family have not spoken to her since Dec. 24, when the pair made their first, failed attempt to enter the temple. A police officer in her home district says her family received several death threats and have left for an undisclosed relative's house. In the car, she sends rapid voice messages on WhatsApp to friends and neighbors, asking if they can find out where her family is. "They're angry with me because I risked my life and now theirs," she says. "But I know that when I return home, we will sort things out."

'I HAVE THE SATISFACTION OF HAVING OPENED THE DOOR FOR ANY WOMAN DEVOTEE.'

—Kanakadurga, one of the first women to enter Sabarimala



"People will always spit at those trying to push for social change," Kanakadurga says, noting that she and Bindu do not regret what they did. "We'll be asked what's the hurry to become equal, why us two, why today, why not tomorrow or why this way. It's part of any transition. I just appeal to my brothers on the streets to stop the violence in our name."

In videos released to the media after their temple visit, Bindu and Kanakadurga are dressed in black, like the other pilgrims. In one clip, the two rush down the back stairs after their visit. In another, as they walk down the hill, Bindu pauses and beams at the phone camera. She asks the person holding the phone to shoot her statement "to avoid fake news." "We just worshipped Ayyappa in Sabarimala and are going back," she says in the local language, Malayalam. "As you can see, the real devotees of Sabarimala are not stopping us. Our visit has been very smooth." A visibly nervous Kanakadurga

smiles but refuses to say anything.

Bindu and Kanakadurga met just two weeks earlier but now finish each other's sentences. They tell TIME they are two divergent souls thrown together by a shared mission. Bindu belongs to the Dalit community, once considered "untouchable." Throughout school, she accompanied her illiterate mother as she labored in paddy fields, plastic factories and hotel kitchens. In 2001, she became the first in her family to go to college; she chose law because her headmistress said it suited "stubborn girls." At the age of 18, she met her husband at a leftist student group; she later took her baby daughter, named after the communist revolutionary Olga Prestes, who was killed by the Nazis, to law classes. She now teaches at the School of Legal Studies in the coastal city of Thalassery and runs a grocery store with her husband.

Kanakadurga has led a more privileged life. As a high-caste Nair, she grew up in an ancestral home with a wide foyer and wooden pillars, and a family temple in the backyard. Her left-leaning father was a clerk in the district court, and her mother was a homemaker. Every evening, her grandmother read Hindu scriptures to Kanakadurga and her five siblings. "My husband and I live a conservative life. We don't want to challenge society," she says. "I am God-fearing, but I pick my battles."

Curious after the Supreme Court verdict, Bindu and Kanakadurga both joined groups on Facebook and WhatsApp formed by other women and secular activists. Some planned to go in late December, an auspicious time. On Dec. 22, four women met for the first time in Thrissur, a 125-mile drive from the base of Sabarimala. Bindu's husband had dropped her at the railway station and wished her luck. But Kanakadurga had told her family she had work out of town. "If I had said where I was actually going, they would have locked me up in a room," she says.

The two other women soon received imploring calls from their families and decided to go home. On Dec. 24, as Bindu and Kanakadurga reached the base of the hill, protesters stopped them and police removed them to avoid a potential riot. Determined to continue their journey, Bindu and Kanakadurga went on hunger strike until the police guaranteed them protection, in line



with the state government's promise.

"Without Kanaka, I would probably have gone in hurriedly and gotten killed," Bindu says. Kanakadurga adds, "Without Bindu, I would have returned home. Now I have the satisfaction of having opened the door for any woman devotee to enter Sabarimala." Her voice softens as she describes the lamp-lit idol of the seated Lord Ayyappa. It brought her more peace than any shrine she had seen before.

HINDUS OPPOSED TO WOMEN entering the Sabarimala temple offer different reasons. "They can go to any other temple, can't they?" says Sandeep Vachaspati, the BJP's media coordinator for Kerala, who believes the temple entry movement is a ploy by activists to "put an end to Sabarimala and the Hindu values it represents."

Many women in Kerala seem to want the status quo. Padma Pillai, from Ready to Wait, a group of women who believe in waiting for menopause before going to Sabarimala, says the courts shouldn't intervene in this kind of religious matter, as not being allowed into Sabarimala doesn't cause "any harm to the body, mind or even

Women in Thiruvananthapuram form part of a statewide "women's wall" spanning 385 miles on Jan. 1

spiritual goals of a woman." The Chennai-based People for Dharma is one of many groups that have filed petitions asking for a review of the judgment, which the Supreme Court will hear on Jan. 22.

The debate is being held not only in TV studios and Parliament but also in buses, trains and living rooms in Kerala. Women repeatedly mention that Kanakadurga's husband might leave her as punishment. In the same breath, the pair are asked why they want to risk their lives for women's rights and why they did not dare to use the front entrance and walk among thousands of devotees and protesters. They have been called tools of the Communist government. Their motives are questioned, their sanity doubted.

The demand for equal entry into religious spaces has historically been important to many larger struggles for social reform in India. Initially a pre-independence movement seeking equality for Dalits with upper-caste Hindus, in

the past few years it has started to include women asserting their rights. Sabarimala is not the first time women have sought entry into temples on par with men. In 2016, in response to a petition led by activist Tupti Desai, the Bombay High Court ended a 400-year-old custom by opening the Shani Shingnapur temple to women. The same year, after a nationwide campaign called Right to Pray led by Muslim women and activists, the court lifted a ban on women entering the inner sanctum of the iconic Haji Ali Dargah in Mumbai. Across India, women are pushing the boundaries—in social struggles and, more often, through court battles.

When Kanakadurga and Bindu turn off their phones for another 24 hours, all they want is to go home, resume their jobs and wait for other women to pick up where they left off. "In a democratic country like India, the idea that men and women are not equal—even if sometimes, in some spaces, or some situations—is so dangerous," Kanakadurga says. "My sons—all our kids—are watching this. I need to go home. They need to listen to my side of the story." □



*Osaka, 21,
embodies an
international sport:
raised in the U.S.
by a mother from
Japan and a father
from Haiti, she
is the first major
tennis champion
from Japan*

Sports

HER TURN

NAOMI OSAKA IS READY TO BECOME THE
NEW FACE OF TENNIS *BY SEAN GREGORY*

ON A WET DECEMBER MORNING IN A SOUTH FLORIDA weight room, the 21-year-old who stunned Serena Williams at the U.S. Open is hard at work preparing to show that the biggest moment of her life was more than a fluke. As an arrow flashes on an iPad in front of her, Naomi Osaka darts in the direction it signals, pauses, then pivots when it sends her the other way, without missing a step. Her coach, Sascha Bajin, joins the drill but leaps the wrong way and almost lands on Osaka's ankle. Bajin feigns horror, prompting fellow pro tour player Monica Puig to suggest Osaka give her coach a hug. "She gives hugs like no other," Bajin says, his sarcasm thicker than midsummer heat.

PHOTOGRAPH BY CAIT OPPERMAN FOR TIME

Sports

"I only hug people I like," Osaka parries.

The exchange would be unremarkable were it between almost anyone else. But Bajin's playful banter is a key part of his strategy to break his young charge out of her shell. And for Osaka, a precocious talent in a global sport with the kind of multinational background that marketers dream about, doing so could mean the difference between a career like that of the idol she upset at the Open—or, well, a fluke. "It's easier to take over the world," Bajin says, "if you're not so caved in."

Many people's introduction to Osaka came in September at the U.S. Open trophy presentation, when the surprise champion covered her eyes with her visor as boos rained from the crowd. "I didn't want people to see me crying," Osaka tells *TIME*, "because that's pathetic."

The moment should have been celebratory—a rising star assuming her place among champions after defeating the greatest of them all. Instead, it was painful. Thousands of fans, livid that umpire Carlos Ramos assessed Williams a code violation for verbal abuse that cost her a full game late in a Grand Slam final, filled Arthur Ashe Stadium with jeers. Rage pierced the still air, as if a wrestling heel were entering the ring and not a 20-year-old being honored for finishing a fairy tale.

Standing on the podium for the ceremony, tennis legend Chris Evert says she just wanted off. "I've never seen or felt anything like it," she says. "The negativity, the anger." From his seat, Bajin seethed: "I wanted to jump everybody in the crowd."

At first, Osaka thought the boos were for her. She knew the crowd, and millions more watching on TV, desperately wanted Williams to win a record-tying 24th Grand Slam title after she nearly died after giving birth. When it was her turn to speak, Osaka apologized for doing her job and beating her opponent. And so it was that the woman who could be the heir to the Williams sisters met the world through a frowning face and lowered brim.

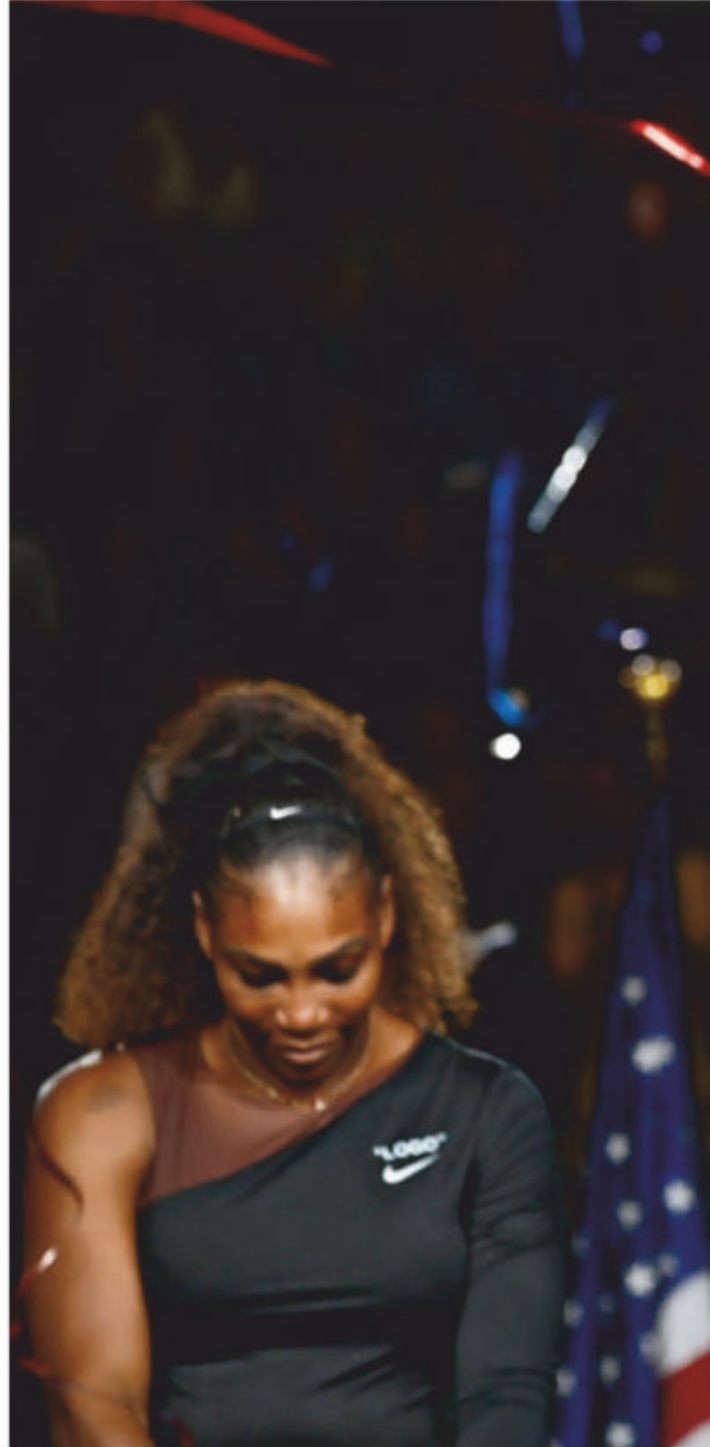
Three months later, Osaka is relaxing on the balcony of the Evert Tennis Academy in Boca Raton, Fla., where she trains. She doesn't fault Williams for fighting with the umpire and upstaging her victory. "Serena is Serena," Osaka says in her

first extended interview since the match. "I didn't experience her life. I can't tell her what she's supposed to do, because there are things that she's gone through. I have nothing against her or anything. I actually still really love her."

Osaka insists she's come to terms with it all. She appreciates that Williams did eventually implore the crowd to stop jeering and applaud Osaka with a proper, if belated, ovation. In fact, Osaka insists she wouldn't change anything about what happened. "In a perfect dream, things would be set exactly the way you would want them," she says. "But I think it's more interesting that in real life, things aren't exactly the way you planned. And there are certain situations that you don't expect, but they come to you, and I think those situations set up things for further ahead."

The future actually came ahead of schedule for Osaka when she stormed through the field in New York, and she and her team are scrambling to capitalize. Born in Japan to a Haitian father and Japanese mother, Osaka grew up in the U.S. but competes for Japan. She has become a bankable celebrity in her native country and a source of inspiration to many multi-racial people there. With the 2020 Summer Olympics in Tokyo, global companies are falling all over themselves to align their message with her 120 m.p.h. serves.

"If you're talking about an international sporting event like the Olympics," says Bob Dorfman, creative director of Baker Street Advertising in San Francisco and a veteran sports marketer, "she's your



international star you're going to market it around. She's got American appeal, Caribbean appeal, Japanese appeal. As nationalities continue to mix in this world, that makes her even more desirable."

First, however, Osaka needs to keep winning. Her biggest test yet will come at the Australian Open, which begins on Jan. 14 in Melbourne. The great players have a way of finding another gear in the Grand Slam spotlight. Osaka has shown that she has the power game to beat the best. But can she do it when everyone is expecting her to—and millions of dollars are riding on it?

OSAKA'S ROAD to the top of tennis traces to 1999, when her father, Leonard Maxine Francois, watched a young Venus and Serena Williams playing in the French Open

6.6M

NUMBER OF TIMES THAT
OSAKA'S U.S. OPEN TROPHY
CEREMONY HAS BEEN
WATCHED ON YOUTUBE



▲
At the U.S. Open trophy ceremony, Osaka apologized to booing fans for beating her idol, Serena Williams

on TV. He heard the story of their hard-driving father, who groomed his daughters despite being a tennis novice, and figured he could do the same. “I always thought I could have been a great athlete if I had that support,” Francois says.

He had met Tamaki Osaka earlier in the decade, as a college student from New York studying in Sapporo. Over the objections of Tamaki’s father, who did not approve of the relationship, the couple married. They had two daughters, Mari and Naomi, born 18 months apart in Osaka. For practical purposes in a country that can be hard for outsiders to penetrate,

900%

INCREASE IN VIEWERS IN JAPAN
WHO WATCHED THE U.S. OPEN
WOMEN’S FINAL IN 2018 OVER
THE PREVIOUS YEAR

the girls took their mother’s surname.

Inspired in part by the Williams sisters’ path, the family left Japan for the U.S. when Naomi was 3. They moved into the Long Island home of Leonard’s Haitian parents, eating beans and oxtail and hearing Creole around the house. Tamaki spoke both Japanese and English to the kids, and kept Japanese customs like Hinamatsuri, the March 3 celebration of girls’ health and happiness. The sisters went to public school, but their lives revolved around tennis. “It wasn’t really our choice,” says Mari, 22, now a professional player who competes in lower-level events.

Still, they liked the game enough to train for hours at public courts on Long Island. And for the girls, the Williams sisters became the models that Richard Williams was for their father. Naomi even did a third-grade report about Serena.

The family plan intensified in 2006 when they moved to Florida, the epicenter of American youth tennis. The kids were homeschooled online and dedicated even more time to honing their craft. “I’m the type of person when I want to do something,” Francois says, “I just go for it.”

The Osaka girls, like the Williams sisters before them, largely eschewed the junior tennis circuit, a cutthroat environment that burns out many promising teen players. Instead, they battled each other every day. “She was sort of the driving force,” Naomi says of her sister. “Because when we were little, I wasn’t really too good. I was just there. I didn’t really care. I was just playing because she was playing and I wanted to beat her.”

As Naomi started winning, it deepened her determination. “Once she puts her focus on something, she never strays from it,” Mari says of her younger sister. “It gets to the point where it’s almost ridiculous.” Mari’s favorite example is not on the court but rather her sister’s penchant for eliminating virtually all fat from her food, even if it takes 20 minutes to trim every piece of meat she eats. “What the hell?” says Mari. “How do you have the time and dedication? But she’s obsessed.”

Naomi was promising enough to turn pro in 2012, when she was 14. She climbed the rankings quickly: at the end of 2014, she stood at No. 250 in the world. Two years later she was ranked No. 40 after reaching her first WTA tournament final,

Sports

and making the third round of all three Grand Slam tournaments she played. Osaka was named 2016 WTA Newcomer of the Year.

But there's a chasm between the good players on tour and the great ones, who regularly contend for Grand Slams. Many close observers credit Osaka's move into the latter group partly to the decision to work with Bajin at the end of 2017. A 34-year-old Serb born and raised in Munich, he spent eight years as Serena Williams' hitting partner before coaching Osaka. "I saw tremendous improvement in mobility around the court," says Evert, who analyzes the tour for ESPN. "The transformation, in a year, was unbelievable."

Osaka plays a power game similar to her idol's, relying on big serves and even bigger shots rather than defense and finesse. Bajin, who knows the style well from his time with Williams, helped Osaka refine her approach. "I see her hit balls late, and she just directs them down the line and they go like freaking rockets," he says. "My heart freaking stops."

In March, Osaka won the competitive Indian Wells tournament, and at the next event, in Miami, she crushed Williams in straight sets in the first round. Williams was in the early stages of her comeback, but the win confirmed that Osaka was someone to reckon with.

Osaka entered the U.S. Open on a three-match losing streak. But she says the losses eased her mind. "I sort of had this feeling of freedom," she says. "At that point I felt the lowest I could be, so I honestly just wanted to recapture the fun feeling."

After Osaka thumped Williams in the final, her life changed in an instant. The awkward tennis prodigy was now something of a celebrity, which has been an adjustment. In November the sisters attended a Drake concert in Miami, and Osaka froze after she realized people were shouting her name as she danced awkwardly. (She says "sitting still in my chair" is her go-to dance move.) Another whoa moment: while driving in Florida after the Open, she noticed a woman in front of her looking repeatedly into a side mirror. At a green light, the other car stood still. Osaka steered around and saw the woman's mouth agape. "She was just looking at me," Osaka says. "I thought it was because of my car. Then

I realized I think it was because of me."

Osaka received a hero's welcome during a November trip to Haiti, and her fame in Japan is approaching pop-star status. When she visited Tokyo in September, Osaka had to sneak into her hotel through a side entrance. Paparazzi trailed her throughout the trip. One night, Osaka's mom Tamaki was relaxing in her hotel room and decided to conduct a little test. She'd flip around the channels and see if she could finally avoid the image of her daughter on the screen. Her experiment failed.

OSAKA'S CONNECTION to Japan is both implicit and complicated. She was born there but has lived in the U.S. since she was 3. She is conversant in the language but typically responds to questions from Japanese reporters in English. Still, when the girls were junior players, their parents decided their daughters would represent Japan in international competitions, given the family's cultural ties to the country. The decision has paid dividends. As the first woman from Japan to win a Grand Slam, Osaka is a pioneer. If she competed as an American, it wouldn't be a milestone at all, and the battle for attention and endorsements would be more difficult.

Despite the affiliation, Osaka says she doesn't feel more attached to one part of her identity than to any other. "I don't really know what feeling Japanese or Haitian or American is supposed to feel like," she says. "I just feel like me."

Japan is one of the most homogenous places in the world. Around 98% of the population is ethnic Japanese, and being

multiracial—or what's known as *hafu*, or half—can be fraught. Carla Capers, an English teacher in Kobe whose parents are African American and Japanese, says co-workers often ask her if she can understand Japanese phrases. "I'm like, 'I live here, I speak the language,'" says Capers. "People kind of dumb everything down. It gets really annoying."

For those who see the possibility of a broader definition of what it means to be Japanese, Osaka has become a symbol. "It means a lot to me, it means a lot to my students who are mixed to see her on TV representing Japan, and seeing a resemblance," says Harmony Egbe, a first-grade teacher in Okinawa whose mother is Japanese and father is Nigerian. "There's an unspoken definition of what it means to be Japanese," says Megumi Nishikura, co-director of the 2013 film *Hafu: The Mixed-Race Experience in Japan*. "Follow the customs, speak the language fully, look Japanese. She doesn't click many of those boxes. That poses a challenge. People are having to redefine Japanese identity. She's helping spread that conversation, which is remarkable."

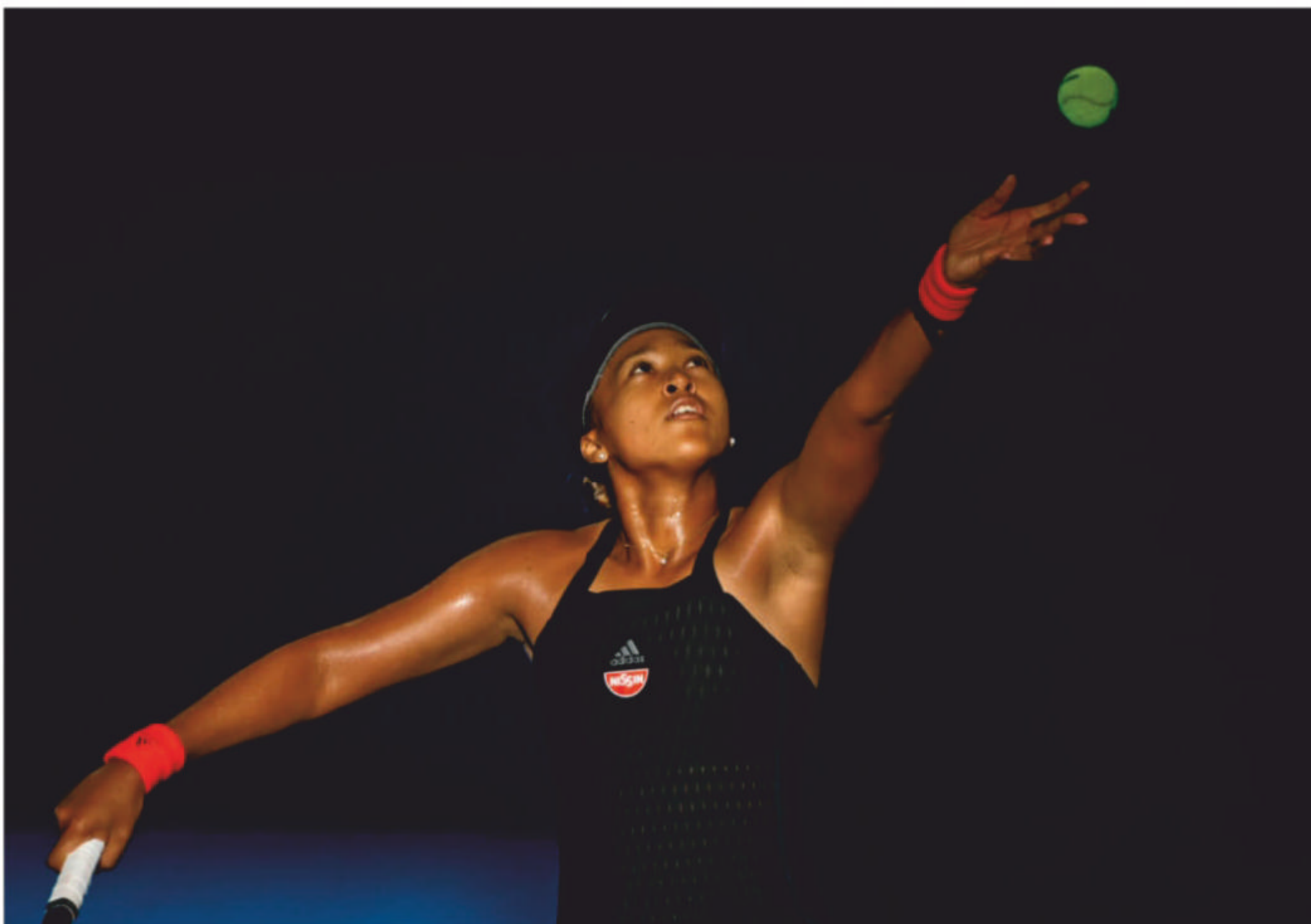
Japan's leading companies have taken notice. The Citizen watch model that Osaka wore for the U.S. Open final almost sold out after her win. In the U.S., sales of the strings Osaka used on her Yonex racket rose 155% in the fourth quarter of 2018 compared with the previous quarter. Nissin, the instant-ramen giant, put her face on its cup of noodles. Among the other major deals announced since the Open: a sponsorship with Shiseido, the cosmetics company, and an agreement with automaker Nissan, which recently released a special-edition model to commemorate the partnership. A deal with an airline is likely to follow, as are those tied to major Olympics sponsors and an apparel company—her contract with Adidas conveniently expired at the end of 2018.

Osaka's agent declined to reveal her endorsement income, but a person with knowledge of the market has estimated that she will go from earning about \$2.5 million per year before the U.S. Open to taking in north of \$15 million annually afterward.

EIGHT-FIGURE INVESTMENTS come with thick strings attached. Osaka's sponsors expect her to keep winning

NO. 4

OSAKA'S CURRENT WTA
RANKING, UP FROM NO. 40 IN
2016 AND NO. 203 IN 2015



and to function as the public face of their brands. Osaka generally prefers to keep hidden. “Everyone around me has more confidence in me than I do in myself,” Osaka says. She’s given to self-deprecating comments like “I think everyone is cooler than me,” which come across as sincere rather than false modesty. And she excessively apologizes, for things large and small. Osaka said she was sorry for beating Williams, though no one deserved that victory more. And after one of our interviews, Osaka apologized for stepping over my computer bag, even though it was in her path.

Some of this comes from spending your childhood chasing tennis dreams rather than being social. “To go out of the way to make a friend, for example, you would have to say hi the morning, text them sometimes,” says sister Mari. “She doesn’t really put in the work for it.”

When asked her favorite moment of

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Osaka, playing in an Australian Open warm-up tournament on Jan. 3, has one of the strongest serves in the game


the post-U.S. Open victory tour, Osaka doesn’t mention going on *Ellen* or meeting LeBron James, one of her favorite athletes. Her pick: a trip to Universal Studios while in Singapore for the tour finals. “I got to skip the lines and stuff,” says Osaka. “So that was fun.”

Osaka is a star without the pretense, a multimillion-dollar corporate investment who still quotes Pokémon and predicts that fans should expect “just a whole bunch of awkwardness” from her off the court. Mari says she hasn’t noticed much of a change in her kid sister, aside from her more frequent shopping excursions online. “She’s going crazy,” says Mari. “Every day is like Christmas.”

If Osaka hasn’t changed, the expectations for her have. She’ll enter the

Australian Open ranked fourth in the world and favored to make a deep run. But the field is loaded. The defending champion, Caroline Wozniacki, is ranked No. 3 in the world, while the two top-ranked players, Simona Halep and Angelique Kerber, each won a Grand Slam last year. Meanwhile, Serena Williams still looms. Williams reached the finals of the last two major tournaments. And the last time she played in Melbourne, in 2017, she defeated sister Venus in the final—while two months pregnant.

The end of the Williams era may not be here, but it is in sight. Osaka is wary of any “next Serena” label. She’s quieter than her idol, and she owns just one Grand Slam trophy to date. But she knows that it’s there for the taking. “You really never know what people can do,” Osaka says. “And how people can change. I don’t think there is ever going to be another Serena Williams. I think I’m going to be me. And I hope people are O.K. with that.” □



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Time



BACK STRONG
True Detective
returns with a
new season likely
to madden fans
who treat it as
a puzzle to be
solved

INSIDE

A STRIKING NEW NOVEL
PLAYS OUT IN THE WILDERNESS
OF AFGHANISTAN

BRYAN CRANSTON AND
KEVIN HART FIND THE UPSIDE
OF A MIDLING COMEDY

THE SOUNDTRACK
OF A STAR IS BORN IS A
WINNER ALL AROUND

TimeOff Opener

TELEVISION

True Detective is not a game

By Judy Berman

TRUE DETECTIVE LIVES. AFTER TWO HOTLY debated seasons followed by an extended period of uncertainty, the crime anthology returns to HBO on Jan. 13 for the first time since 2015.

During the hiatus, the network recruited some marquee talent to rehabilitate the shaky franchise. Now the show stars Mahershala Ali, who has won awards for his supporting turns in *Moonlight* and *Green Book*, in the psychologically rich lead role he deserves. HBO enlisted low-budget thriller master Jeremy Saulnier (*Green Room*, *Blue Ruin*) to direct. And they brought in *Deadwood* auteur David Milch to assist the show's creator, Nic Pizzolatto, a first-time showrunner with a bad habit of sounding contentious in interviews.

Those efforts pay off in a solid third season whose structure and style hew close to those of the first. The show is set in a grim Ozark town, populated by white characters who speak a common language of coded racism. Episodes linger on exchanges between Ali's earnest Detective Wayne Hayes and his partner Roland West (Stephen Dorff). Across three timelines spanning 35 years, Hayes grapples with the case of two missing children.

In that sense, it's a welcome return to form: before crashing and burning in the California neo-noir of its second season, which for a long time seemed as though it would be the show's last, *True Detective* was a smash hit, thanks to the instantly iconic buddy-cop duo of Matthew McConaughey and Woody Harrelson, reams of quotable dialogue and awe-inspiring visual acrobatics courtesy of director Cary Joji Fukunaga.

Yet it's also worth remembering that even that story arc had ultimately failed to satisfy its most vocal viewers. Instead of tying up eight episodes of cryptic clues with a bow, Pizzolatto let loose ends dangle, supplying a quick resolution to his baroque whodunit before concluding on a more philosophical note.

There were viewers—myself included—who liked that the show's conclusion was open-ended. McConaughey's breakout character, the alcoholic pseudo-sage Rust Cohle, had been a nihilist, talking in opaque aphorisms like “Time is a flat circle.” The finale exposed Rust's worldview as reductive, and made a case for why a person in so much pain should keep fighting the forces of darkness in a universe where the war between good and evil will remain forever unresolved.

Yet a larger cohort—or at least a more outspoken one—were furious at Pizzolatto for pulling what they saw as a bait and switch. After all, they had spent weeks rewatching episodes, consulting recaps, sleuthing out literary references and comparing notes on the Internet with other obsessives desperate to solve the Southern Gothic mystery



↑
Hayes' (Ali) fateful investigation leads him to the classroom of English teacher and aspiring author Amelia Reardon (Carmen Ejogo)

based on what they presumed to be a surplus of evidence. By the middle of the season, TV bloggers and a *True Detective* message board on the mega-discussion forum Reddit had become fully symbiotic, churning out and chewing on each other's 5,000-word theories as if the show were a massive multiplayer online game. For these viewers, *True Detective* failed not because of any particular story flaw but because in its final moments, it claimed the right to be an ambiguous work of art—instead of an interactive challenge that fans could win or lose by solving the mystery.

TRUE DETECTIVE CERTAINLY didn't pioneer the gamification of narrative television. For as long as there have been cop shows (*Naked City* premiered on ABC in 1958), viewers have investigated crimes along with their detective stars; for as long as we've had sci-fi brainteasers (*The Twilight Zone*, 1959), we've spent hours decoding their subtext. Play-along mysteries have always meant big ratings, from *Dallas*' “Who shot J.R.?” to



Twin Peaks' "Who killed Laura Palmer?" And fans have always collaborated and competed to anticipate the answers to those questions.

Crucial to these games is serialization, which gives viewers time to scour each episode for usable tidbits—and networks time to maximize hype. In the early 21st century, when prestige TV exploded and serialized stories weren't just for soap operas anymore, a complex mystery became the mark of a cerebral show. The wildly popular *Lost* kicked off the modern era of the fan theory, ensnaring its audience in a sticky web of theology, weird science and parallel dimensions.

The backlash to that show's finale, which not only left many mysteries unsolved but also barely diverged from a simple, seasons-old fan theory, revealed one hazard of gamified TV: an unsatisfying conclusion makes everything that came before it feel like a waste of time. Even when they're well executed, these plots train us to see every story with an ounce of ambiguity

as a puzzle. A subset of *Mad Men*'s audience convinced itself that Don Draper would turn out to be hijacker D.B. Cooper. As the last season of *Game of Thrones* approaches, half a million subscribers to Reddit's r/FanTheories are pondering such theories as "Samwell is the author of *A Song of Ice and Fire*." Over at r/TrueDetective, fans are gearing up for Season 3 by close-reading cast lists and character surnames.

It would be possible to ignore this noise if TV makers resolved to do the same. But *Westworld* already went off the rails last year, after creators Jonathan Nolan and Lisa Joy pranked the Reddit page that had predicted Season 1's big twists with a false promise to reveal spoilers, then fumbled by trying too hard to stump that commentariat. And last month, Netflix kicked off a new stage in the gamification of TV, debuting a stand-alone episode of its tech-dystopia anthology *Black Mirror* titled "Bandersnatch." Framed as a "Netflix Interactive Film," it unfolds like a kids' *Choose Your Own Adventure* novel from the 1980s, offering viewers dozens of binary choices that shape the fate of its hero Stefan, played by Fionn Whitehead. (True to *Black Mirror*'s self-reflexive form, Stefan is a teen video-game developer in the mid-'80s who comes to question the existence of free will.)

The result is a technological marvel that's as dull to watch-slash-play as it is impressive to behold. Stefan's story can be clever; one path leads him to the discovery that he's being controlled via a futuristic platform called "Netflix." Yet the structure makes the story feel unspecific, and the often arbitrary decisions players make on Stefan's behalf aren't narratively fulfilling. None of the multiple endings has more emotional resonance than a video-game cutscene—which is especially disappointing when you consider how effective past episodes of *Black Mirror* have been at inducing existential dread.

EVEN IF "BANDERSNATCH" doesn't turn out to be the future of television, its mere existence is a sign of

times when games of speculation can drown out wider-ranging conversations about shows whose meaning can't be reduced to a right or wrong answer. What a shame to spend time collecting the *Breaking Bad* Easter eggs in *Better Call Saul* when you could be processing the latter's ideas about moral philosophy, or to sniff out all of the tiny parallels between fictional tech pioneers in *Halt and Catch Fire* and real Silicon Valley figures when you can absorb its deeply humanistic message? The right computer program can beat any simple game, but only a person can appreciate the profundity of a narrative that communicates some universal truth.

What's ironic about *True Detective*'s amateur sleuths—an army that includes both critics and commenters—is that they never seemed to realize that the show is about the unquantifiable power

of storytelling. It illustrates how memory is a narrative shaped by our subjective interpretations of events, not an objective record of the truth. The show's first season was, on a structural level, a story told by Rust that winds up revealing how his cynicism has precluded him from seeing the full picture of either the case or his life.

In Season 3, Ali's Hayes confronts a different narrative dilemma: If he can't remember crucial elements of a case that shaped his career, his family and his legacy, how can he understand the life he's lived? Which is another way of asking: How can we know ourselves in the absence of a complete, internalized autobiography?

Memory isn't the only source of self-knowledge, of course. We can also find it in art that challenges us to see through the eyes of its characters and creators, to compare those perspectives with our own, to weigh abstract ideas that can help us hone our own beliefs. Reducing these works to puzzles is a form of escapism, one that grows more attractive as technology evolves and the stress of living in reality keeps escalating. There's a lot to be said for a show that makes you more interactive. But sometimes it's better to be introspective. □

'Why do you think we're trying to trick you? The show's not trying to outsmart you.'

NIC PIZZOLATTO,
in the Daily Beast, 2014

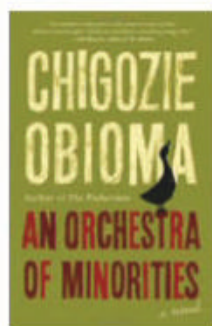
PROFILE

Chigozie Obioma channels Homer in a new Nigerian epic

By Ciara Nugent

WITHOUT MEANING TO, CHIGOZIE OBIOMA FELL in love with tragedies. As a child in Akure, Nigeria, he devoured Greek myths at the library; plucked Shakespeare plays from his father's shelves; and absorbed cautionary folktales from the southeastern Igbo tribe, passed down by his mother. If there was a common thread, it was an obsession with fate—often the distinctly gloomy kind. “I must have internalized that,” he tells TIME over the phone from Lagos, where he is visiting family. “I’m always trying to figure out: Why do bad things happen to you when you don’t seem to deserve it?”

It’s a question that haunts the protagonist of Obioma’s new novel, *An Orchestra of Minorities*. Chinonso, a poultry farmer in Umuahia, Nigeria, is desperate to impress his fiancée Ndali’s wealthy family. When an old school friend offers to help him secure education and employment in Europe, he sells everything he owns, only to discover he has fallen victim to a painfully obvious con. He finds himself penniless and stranded in North Cyprus—a nominal state outside of the E.U., recognized only by Turkey—with few opportunities.



^
The cosmology of the Igbo tribe provides the novel's framework



The Nigerian author follows his 2015 debut with an ambitious epic

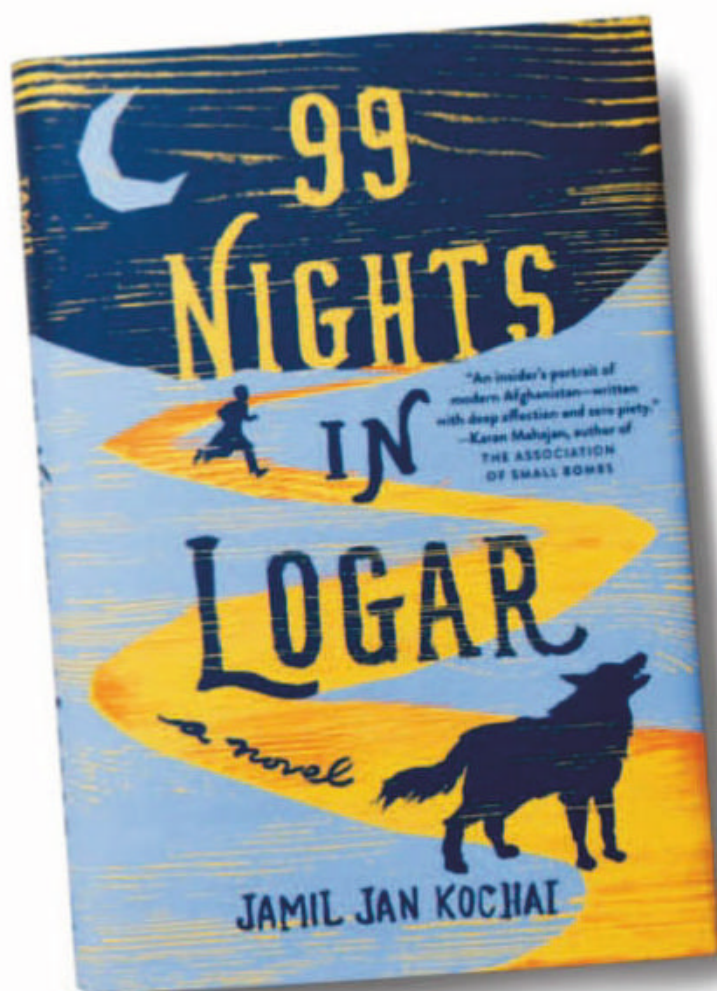
When Obioma, now 33, published his 2015 debut *The Fishermen*, which was short-listed for the Man Booker Prize, at least one critic compared him to Chinua Achebe, the godfather of Nigerian literature. His follow-up validates the comparison. The *Odyssean Orchestra* affirms its author’s place among a raft of literary stars—Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Abubakar Adam Ibrahim and others—drawing the eyes of international critics to Africa’s most populous country.

OBIOMA MOVED TO THE U.S. in 2012 and now teaches literature and writing at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, an institution vastly different from those he attended: first a strict religious university in Nigeria that favored corporal punishment, and later a college in North Cyprus, where he would meet Jay, the inspiration for *Orchestra*’s ill-fated protagonist. A fellow Nigerian student, Jay was lured to the island by fraudsters who promised riches and prestige. He realized his mistake as soon as he arrived. “Devastation is an understatement for what he felt. He was broken,” Obioma says. Just a few days later, Jay died a tragic death.

His classmate’s misfortune inspired the beginning of Chinonso’s story, but it took Obioma almost a decade to fine-tune it, building Chinonso’s life events into a mystical epic. The novel is narrated by his chi—a spiritual guide that, according to Igbo cosmology, watches over human beings and negotiates for them before the gods. As the spirit speaks to defend Chinonso for an unspecified crime, the reader is sent on a kaleidoscopic journey through both early-2000s Nigeria and the Igbo universe, discovering the lives of the chi’s previous hosts, from a man taken to Virginia as a slave centuries earlier to the protagonist’s own uncle.

Obioma wanted to write a book that unpacks the Igbo worldview, “in the way that *Paradise Lost* does for Christianity,” he says. Few prominent writers have explored the chi, apart from Achebe, who discusses its impact on the fictional Umofia clan in his 1958 classic *Things Fall Apart*. Obioma hopes *An Orchestra of Minorities* might spark a wider discussion about aspects of old African cultures that have been sidelined by European and American influence. “People my dad’s generation downward are not really in touch with that heritage,” he says. “After colonialism, [Nigerians] really became a Western society.”

Obioma, ever fascinated by destiny, says the Igbo concept of fate is complicated. It blends the free will of humans with divine plans they can’t control. “We’re like Chinonso’s chickens: when a hawk carries one of our children off, all we can do is take it,” Obioma says. “No matter how privileged you think you are, on a spiritual level, we are all minorities—small things.”



REVIEW

Coming of age in the Afghan wilderness

By Nicholas Mancusi

AFTER SIX YEARS OF MARWAND'S LIVING in America, his homecoming to Afghanistan is not off to a great start. Nearly as soon as the 12-year-old boy returns with his family to their relatives' compound in the rural province of Logar, the venerable yet vicious guard dog, Budabash, bites off the tip of Marwand's index finger. "For the next few weeks," Marwand tells us, "I called a jihad against Budabash. Until, of course, about 31 days later, when he got free." With his young relatives Gul, Zia and Dawood in tow, Marwand sets off into the countryside to try to recover the dog before nightfall.

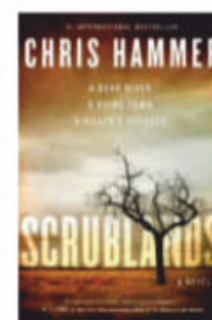
The opening of Jamil Jan Kochai's debut novel *99 Nights in Logar* may feel like the beginning of a comfortably familiar story: a ragtag group of kids on a forbidden adventure like something out of *The Goonies* or *Stand by Me*. But as this band advances through the vivid landscape of desert, mountains, canals and a

< Kochai's affecting debut begins as a lighthearted adventure and gradually deepens

near impenetrable maze of clay compounds that recalls the Minotaur's labyrinth, we learn that we are not reading a simple story, nor a single one. Instead, Kochai, who was born in Pakistan and raised in the U.S., weaves together a tapestry of stories to present a captivating image of the country that has been called "the graveyard of empires."

ARCHETYPAL CHARACTERS like the thief and the soldier drift in and out as the search for Budabash is sidetracked by other misadventures. Throughout Marwand's time in Logar, he and the other characters swap stories, which appear in the text under their own headings, such as "The Tale of the Butcher's Son," "The Tale of the Bibi and the Flood" and "The Tale of the Old Dog." For the characters, these tales are not mere entertainments, but rather ways of understanding their often war-shattered world, the enactment of collective memory that creates a family, and a nation. For American readers, they are a way into a culture too often reduced to stereotypes.

Kochai maintains a playful humor in Marwand's voice, channeling something like *One Thousand and One Nights* meets *The Sandlot*, and we feel as if we are watching the coming-of-age of a real boy. Yet, especially in its second half, the novel departs from realism into the hazy lyricism of mythmaking on the way to its affecting conclusion. Its final meta-story is introduced in English as the tale of a deceased ancestor whose memory has loomed over the entire narrative, then rendered entirely in Pashto. English readers may not understand the words, but they can comprehend Kochai's message—a bulwark against exoticism that reminds us that if we can treat stories with respect, we have a better chance of respecting the lives those stories serve. □



REVIEW

Deadly drama down under

Scrublands begins one year after a young, respected priest has perpetrated a mass shooting against his own congregation in a small Australian town, taking five lives before losing his own. In veteran journalist Chris Hammer's fiction debut, already a best seller in the author's native Australia, reporter Martin Scarsden (likewise a seasoned pro) is sent to the sun-scorched outback town of Riversend on assignment. His task is to report on how the backwater is recovering from the horrific event, which made international news. But as he learns that the accepted motive for the killings—the priest was a pedophile soon to be exposed—might not be the truth, he finds himself dangerously entangled with the townspeople and their dark history.

Hammer, the author of two nonfiction books on the lands and people of his home country, with three decades' experience as a journalist, writes with a newspaperman's clarity of purpose, and muscular prose keeps the many weighty themes aloft. There are plenty of familiar noir tropes here, but they are well deployed; the web of intrigue at work in a complex town keeps the pages turning. For readers in America, where a low-fatality shooting can recede from the news cycle within a couple of days, the book is a timely reminder of how tragically we have been inured to the horrors of mass killing. —N.M.



Hart and Cranston: a spoonful of good intentions

MOVIES

The Upside means well

By Stephanie Zacharek

THE LATEST ENTRY IN THE “THE black guy and the white guy *can* get along!” canon is *The Upside*, in which Bryan Cranston plays Phillip, a rich-guy quadriplegic who hires ex-con Dell, played by Kevin Hart, to be his caregiver. Their start is rocky; they have both class and race differences to overcome, not to mention that Phillip, paralyzed from the neck down after a parasailing accident, has no choice but to use a wheelchair. But Dell will soon introduce the opera-loving Phillip to the joys of Aretha Franklin, even as Dell falls a little bit in love with opera himself. He will also learn to perform what he views as the most distasteful task of his job: changing Phillip’s catheter. After a great deal of protestation, accompanied by a series of exaggerated sour-milk faces, Dell learns that touching another man’s penis—in certain controlled circumstances, at least—really isn’t so bad.

Even if you roll your eyes at this example of retrograde homophobia, you might be able to excuse it, especially

in a movie as well-intentioned as this one is. But the scene is strange to watch in the context of the controversy now swirling around Hart, who gave up his gig as the host of this year’s Academy Awards ceremony after it came to light that he’d posted a series of homophobic remarks on his Twitter feed in 2010 and 2011. Hart may yet host the Oscars—although for now he says he won’t. But as Dell, Hart’s anti-penis-touching shtick—the wincing, the flailing arms, the wrinkled nose—is too desperate to be funny, and for a time, at least, it jiggles the movie off its footing.

That’s too bad, but it’s also a by-product of the times we’re living in, an era when our perceptions about performers we generally like may follow us into the movie theater, hard as we may try to leave them at the door. Dell’s phallus phobia notwithstanding, *The Upside*—a remake of the 2011 French film *Intouchables*, based on a true story and a huge hit in its home country—is neither great nor terrible. It quavers in that middle ground of pictures you think you might watch on a plane someday, and you could make a worse choice.

Directed by Neil Burger, whose previous film was the 2014 young-adult adventure *Divergent*, it tootles along cheerfully enough on its stretch of predictably laid-out track. Before Dell arrives, Phillip has soured on life. He employs an efficient schoolmarm type, Yvonne (Nicole Kidman, in a role that asks little of her), to manage his business affairs, but it’s Dell’s appearance on the scene that really kicks his joie de vivre back into gear.

The rapport between Cranston, so superb at being a crab apple that he could probably do it in his sleep, and Hart, a gifted and energetic performer, has some crackle. But even in that equation Hart presents some problems: his lines tend to hit with the snap of a locker-room towel—they don’t

leave much space for his fellow actors. And that’s probably the one factor that derails this otherwise efficient picture more than anything. At one point Phillip surprises Dell by playing an Aretha track he’s never heard before, her “Nes-sun Dorma” from the 1998 Grammys. “The Queen,” Dell observes, “makes everything better.” He’s not wrong—but even she can do only so much. □

‘I haven’t read a script. I’m thinking, “Am I in it?”’

BRYAN CRANSTON, to *Parade* magazine, on rumors of an upcoming *Breaking Bad* movie

MUSIC

How *A Star Is Born*'s music hit the sweet spot

By Raisa Bruner

THERE'S A MOMENT IN "SHALLOW," the standout single from Bradley Cooper's *A Star Is Born*, where Lady Gaga lets go and just roars. It's chill-inducing to hear for the first time in the movie, as Gaga's ingenue Ally takes the stage alongside Cooper's grizzled rocker Jackson Maine, but it sounds just as good playing on the radio, where it's been in heavy rotation for the past three months. You could argue that it's that big, cathartic bellow that's set Gaga, Cooper and their collaborators on a straight path to world domination. Really good soundtracks don't come around all that often—but when they do, they mark the fastest way to rule the worlds of both film and music in one fell swoop and earn serious award gold along the way.

Which is exactly what *A Star Is Born* has done. The film has handily beaten the domestic box-office numbers of live-action musicals like *La La Land* and *Les Misérables*, raking in nearly \$400 million globally. Meanwhile, the certified-platinum soundtrack topped the *Billboard* chart when it debuted in October, besting recent soundtrack records, knocking down releases from popular artists like Lil Wayne and even topping Gaga's own previous chart successes as a solo artist. At the 2019 Golden Globes, Gaga and her co-writers took home the Best Original Song trophy for "Shallow," teeing her up nicely for an Academy Award nomination.

A murderer's row of musical talent—from rocker Lukas Nelson to English musician and DJ Mark Ronson to country singer-songwriter Jason Isbell—helped build that soundtrack. But its popularity still probably comes down to Gaga, who is one of the decade's most chameleonic artists. Her big-screen debut guaranteed a passionate built-in audience, and she sounds equally at home on the rootsy rock that Ally sings at the beginning of her career as she does on the sleek synth-pop that she performs as she progresses. Yet Gaga's last album, the folksy, back-to-basics *Joanne*, underperformed

commercially; for some, that persona proved too much of a departure. *A Star Is Born* reminded viewers of the powerhouse performer that she's always been within the context of a new character. Plus, there's her voice. "To have a voice like that in a song that you write is a dream come true," says songwriter Natalie Hemby, who contributed to Ally's two big emotional solos—both being put forward as Oscar contenders alongside "Shallow."

SOUNDTRACKS HAVE BEEN big business for a while, of course—and an important vehicle for established singers to make a mark in the world of film, as Gaga is now doing. In 1992, Whitney Houston's role in *The Bodyguard* saw her turn in two iconic performances with "I Will Always Love You" and "I Have Nothing," bringing her to triple-threat status. That album remains the best-selling soundtrack of all time. More recently, movie musicals like *Dreamgirls* and *The Greatest Showman* have landed top-selling songs



▲
"It's real, it's authentic, and people gravitate toward that in life," Nelson says of the soundtrack, which he helped produce

and Oscar appreciation. Even action films like *Black Panther*, *Suicide Squad* and *Furious 7* have spawned chart hits, like Wiz Khalifa and Charlie Puth's blockbuster "See You Again," which helped launch Puth's career.

But *A Star Is Born*'s level of cultural saturation is unusual, as the film and its cast continue to get memed in real time on their march toward Oscar night. It's paying off not just for Gaga as she makes her pivot to movie star, and Cooper as he makes his mark as a director, but also for everyone involved in the soundtrack. "In some way, we were plucked from obscurity," Hemby says of the team assembled for the music. "We've all had success in our different ways, but we were given this chance to shine." Just as Jackson Maine set Ally up for her chance at stardom, this soundtrack is giving a slew of artists a very good shot at real-world gold. □

7 Questions

Ken Jeong The *Crazy Rich Asians* actor on his past life as a doctor, his upcoming Netflix special and getting serious in stand-up

You perform to a room of mostly people of Asian descent in your stand-up special, *You Complete Me, Ho*. How did that affect the mood? The special actively captures the electricity in the room. To have a predominantly Asian crowd that night, that doesn't always happen. There was a loose feel to it. I never have a set order, but I knew where to add certain bits or improvise. What I love about stand-up is that you can just roll with it like jazz and see where it takes you.

The special has a lot of sincere moments, especially about your wife Tran Ho's facing breast cancer. Is stand-up in a place where there's room to get serious? Yes. I wanted to do something very different from my old stand-up, which was joke-based. I wanted this to be real. That coincides with today's stand-up comedy. Comics like Hannah Gadsby or Ali Wong exemplify how you can do deeply personal work in a stand-up format. It wasn't like that 20 years ago.

There's been a collective shift toward wanting more personal material. It's definitely for the better, because you can only tell so many dick jokes. You need something deeper to say.

You were a doctor before getting into comedy. How did coming from a normal day job shape your perspective on Hollywood? I want to advance my career in show business, but it's only worth doing if you truly love it. *The Hangover* was the otherworldly thing that changed my career from black-and-white to Technicolor and made me famous, but [the NBC series] *Community* taught me how to act. I look at it in two ways: Are you working, but also are you growing?

You give a shout-out to Kevin Hart in your special, saying he's influenced your career. He's been in the headlines recently for stepping down from hosting the Oscars after some

“YOU CAN DO DEEPLY PERSONAL WORK IN A STAND-UP FORMAT. IT WASN'T LIKE THAT 20 YEARS AGO.”



people objected anew to some of his past tweets and hurtful comments about the LGBTQ community. Have you talked to him about this? I have reached out to offer support as a friend. It's true, he inspired me to get back into stand-up. In the current situation, he's talked about evolving and learning, and I think that's what this is about. Life changes your perspective. I'm confident Kevin is earnest on that path. Only he knows where that will take him.

Whoopi Goldberg floated your name as an Oscars host. Are you up for the gig? The way I can make sense of it is that the success of *Crazy Rich Asians* is why I'm even being mentioned. The director, Jon Chu, calls it not a movie but a movement. And you know that movement is real when you have names like mine being bandied about.

You recently attended the Golden Globes, where Sandra Oh, who is of Korean descent, co-hosted and won an award. Are you optimistic about Asian-American representation? *Crazy Rich Asians* showed that it's profitable. But it's just one story. Being at the Globes and seeing so many Asian friends there felt like how the gang from *St. Elmo's Fire* must have felt back in the day, this cool clique of Asian-American actors who genuinely support each other. To have more Asian Americans at the forefront is the dream. We're beginning to live that.

You're a judge on *The Masked Singer*, a new reality singing competition on Fox. Why is it perfect for this moment? The Korean version is my mom's favorite show. Watching that, I found myself hooked. It's just very addicting—a lot of surprises, and the format is made to make money. My mom is ecstatic. That's my Sandra Oh-ish victory there. My dad is happy because I was a doctor, and my mom is happy because I'm on *The Masked Singer*. —MAHITA GAJANAN

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